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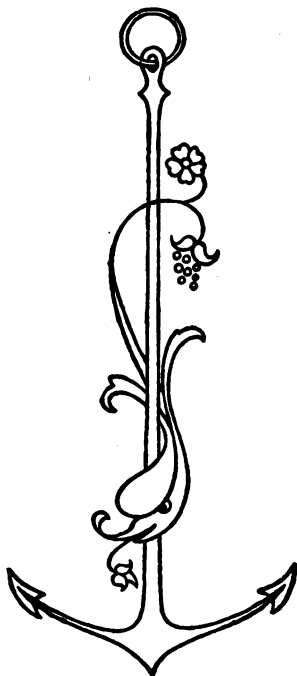
Learn me

THE SISTERS

THE SISTERS

BY

MRS. PERCY DEARMER



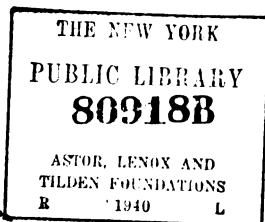
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NEW YORK
THE McCLURE COMPANY
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Published, March, 1908



To
Mr. Knowles

My Dear Marian:

A book during its production becomes inextricably interwoven with the thoughts that color the writer's life—indeed, it becomes in great measure a part of that life itself—and it is not as a mere story, but rather as a certain view of human existence, which you during the last two years have unconsciously helped to keep before me, that I offer *The Sisters* for your acceptance.

But here I feel that I would like to add a word of explanation—not of apology, for good or bad, this book has been seriously worked out—but of explanation for the presence here of certain persons and situations, the detail of which may, when you are called suddenly to face it, give you pain. My justification is that such persons and situations are brought into my story, not because I feel any pleasure in darkness in itself, but because darkness is not less necessary to the development of character, as we know it, than light. And if Elizabeth Templeton exists in this world, so also most assuredly does Rosalie de Winton. May I say in passing that the only character in my book that can in any way claim to be a portrait, is that of Rosalie de Winton. And compared with the original, it is a portrait in monochrome. There is not a single incident in the career of that lady (excluding, of course, the especial circumstances in which I have placed her) which has not had its counterpart in the life of an actual woman whom chance once brought in my way.

I witnessed the incident of the over-affectionate dachshund, the story of which Rosalie recounts casually to Lord Berk-

hamstead. I heard the dog's continued yelps of welcome, and then the scream and the thud, as it dropped from the third floor of a London house to its death. I mention this so that you may not accuse me of straining my imagination to compass a too violent personality.

Having said this much, I feel that I may, without fear of being misunderstood, offer you my book, humbly and sincerely, and as containing much of what you yourself have given.

Yours affectionately,

MABEL DEARMER

LONDON, *New Year's Day*, 1908

THE SISTERS

*"The terrible kings are on me
With spears that are deadly bright;
Against me so from the cradle
Do Fate and my fathers fight."*

ISABEL IMOGEN GURNEY

Prologue

I

"Up in the shine of God's hall
A soul heard a mother's call.

"God smiled and said: 'Go down
To the earth which is a fair town.'

"So he went by the golden stair—
God's answer to the mother's prayer."

L. HOUSMAN.

AT Templeton Manor the nurseries lay at the end of a long gallery—three steps, a passage, and then an open door and sunshine.

The nurseries were white; the green carpets extended to white boards, trellised roses climbed at intervals on white walls, the deadness of which was broken by colored reproductions of Italian masterpieces—Fra Angelico's singing angels, Botticelli's Virgin, wistful and a little wan.

It was spring; great bowls of bluebells testified to the fact. They had been picked by the servants for Baby Ruth, and their amazing blueness added another note of color to the rich chorus.

Lady Templeton's eyes rested pleasantly upon the flowers. As she lay back in her rocking chair immediately under the Botticelli, her baby in her arms, she was curiously like the picture, although her features held the brilliancy and finish of the modern Englishwoman rather than the softness of the Italian's mother; yet in her downward glance at the child a shade of wistfulness became apparent. Her thoughts had been wistful; they had attempted a long journey out into her daughter's unknown future, but finding no resting place had returned unfulfilled to the fair present. With a sigh, of which the greater part was pure content, Elizabeth Templeton lifted her infant in her arms, and laid her cheek against its comfortable sweetness.

Some eighteen months ago the engagement of the youngest Miss Grahame to Sir Raymond Templeton, Baronet, of Templeton Manor in the county of Hampshire, had excited the exultation of that lady's relations and the envy of her friends. Sir Raymond was everything that was desirable—young, rich, handsome, and “a prince of gentlemen.” Also he was *good*—so Elizabeth said, and she could have been happy with no one whose morality had not been lifted out of the groove of respectable virtue into the higher sphere where it becomes genius, the attribute of saints and heroes. Sir Raymond's friend Mrs. Whitter would have added “and of royalties”; but then Mrs. Whitter sacrificed even a becoming decency to a clever phrase. Society, according to Mrs. Whitter, was composed of saints and sinners; no middle variety was tolerable; mediocrity in any form was abhorrent. Of these two classes of persons Sir Raymond—since his marriage at least—inclined to the first; and for the time being Templeton Manor saw little of Mrs. Whitter.

Now Monica Holden was a woman of a different caliber; she was invited on interminable visits, and in such high estimation was she held that her departure brought with it not relief, but a blank, and the sigh with which both husband and wife spoke of the absent was one of regret rather than deliverance. This redounded to the credit of the Templetons, for Monica was an out-of-the-way creature, blunt, outspoken, and given to queer turns of thought and expression. Most people found her exasperating. She had, however, a good deal of earthly knowledge—it was the reverse of worldly—and—odd taste in a spinster!—she had an eye for babies and was able to discern their points. This in Elizabeth's view was a covering virtue, and she opened her heart to Monica Holden, and enclosed her in that closed garden.

These last eventful years had been for Elizabeth full of surprises. This much she had confessed to Monica in a sudden burst of revelation. Her girlhood had been spent in preparation for the disillusion of marriage. Her maiden dreams of manly perfection had been broken by a mother who, even in those days, was imbued with the modern spirit of truth at any



price, and who swore that ignorance was not innocence, to such effect that her daughter bent beneath the burden of many disclosures. "Many inventions!" Sir Raymond, when questioned later, had indignantly declared them to be. These things were let loose upon Elizabeth when that young woman, at the age of eighteen, was considered able to bear them, and after having been brought up by a governess who forbade her the Old Testament on the score of undue outspokenness, and who supervised with a pair of scissors even the illustrated papers, she was suddenly called upon to face, not in fact, indeed, but in word, the strange thing that Mrs. Worthington Grahame described as "life." Elizabeth listened, pained, bewildered, and ashamed. Then came the glamour of love and the blindness of passion. After that her education was conducted, not by an unconventional mother, but by a considerate husband who was very much in love. Her faith in the goodness of the world returned to her, the specters raised by her mother's words were laid low and in marriage she discovered her forebodings to have been the illusion, and her dream the truth.

Monica met her confidence with silence.

"Now I know all about everything," said Elizabeth complacently.

As there was no reply, she lifted her head and fixed her clear blue eyes upon her friend.

"Well," she questioned, "do you doubt that I know the truth?"

"No, no," protested Monica. "I—I—what *is* truth?" The words burst from her in a cry, but like jesting Pilate her courage failed her, and she did not wait for an answer. She jumped up from her low chair and, scattering the contents of her workbasket, fled from the room.

"Monica is so funny," said Elizabeth, describing the occurrence to her husband. "Sometimes I think that she is a little mad—of course, nicely mad," she hastened to correct herself, "in the way that a great many clever and good people are mad. I only meant—not ordinary."

"No," said Sir Raymond, "Monica is not ordinary."

Upstairs in her room Monica was writing in a private book

whose clasp was locked by a key generally held upon her chatelaine. It bore upon its cover in gold lettering the somewhat pretentious title, "The thoughts of Monica Holden."

"Truth," she wrote, "*is unknowable. We being human and compassed about by illusion cannot penetrate to her. We can discern her shadow only in the reflection cast by many lies.*"

Later, in a different mood, she wrote, "*Truth is a madcap, a will-o'-the-wisp, a sprite, hiding now in the colors of the rainbow, and now naked at the bottom of a well. At one time she assumes the cap and bells of the fool, and at another the austere garb of the philosopher. She changes her form as easily as her raiment, and her hue as easily as her form. She is a very chameleon—to no two persons alike.*"

When she had finished writing she locked the book and replaced it in her drawer.

Now, some days later, she wandered in search of Lady Templeton. Sir Raymond was away for a day and a night, and his wife was disconsolate: indeed, since he left she had spent most of her time in the nurseries and hither Monica turned her steps.

"Come in," cried Elizabeth to the opening door; "I am longing for someone to admire Ruth with me."

Monica entered—a tall, gray figure. Her dress and her eyes were gray, and her hair was gray also—prematurely gray, for she was but thirty-nine. A smile lingered always about the faint wrinkles in the corners of her mouth. Her hands were delicate and firm; they epitomized her character—fragile as flowers and as strong as iron.

At the same moment the nurse opened the door of the inner room. Elizabeth shook her head at her.

"No, nurse, please, I want my daughter a little longer."

"Very well, my lady," replied the woman as she retired; "I only thought that she might be wearying your ladyship."

"Wearying me!" Elizabeth bent her face over the child. "Oh, you duck! You lump of delight! I declare she is waking up! Come here, Monica, and worship! Now, hasn't she got her father's eyes? Hasn't she?"

Monica sat upon the floor at her friend's feet and did all

that was required of her—did it willingly, for the feeling that she had for Elizabeth and for Elizabeth's child was in reality something akin to worship.

"I have been making plans for Ruth's future," said Elizabeth at last.

"How?" asked Monica in surprise. "Surely it is already planned—unless she is to do or be something exceptional."

"Exceptional! Oh, I hope not!" Elizabeth's tone was a solemn one. "I have seen enough of exceptional people—all mamma's friends were exceptional. Ruth is to be quite ordinary—no freak, no genius; she is to be nothing more than a simple English girl if I have anything to do with the making of her."

"Poor scrap," said Monica bending over the sleeping child. "Isn't it extraordinary, Elizabeth, that all the past is in that tiny atom of pink and white? The future too——" she lifted the small hand—"the future is there too—if we only knew."

"The future?"

"Assuredly."

Elizabeth shivered.

"What is the matter?" asked Monica. "Are you cold?"

"No," returned Elizabeth with a quick laugh. "It was only a goose walking over my grave. I don't understand," she went on; "that the child should sum up the past is a reasonable idea, but—the future? Surely she will make her own future? Her life will be in her own hands!"

"Will it?" said Monica quickly. "And which life? At the present moment she has in her the possibilities of a great many lives. Circumstances, that strange thing we call Chance, and the fretting out of other lives upon her, will determine which, should it ever be recorded, will be the biography of Ruth Templeton."

"No, I don't like that!" exclaimed Elizabeth. She spoke with conviction. "I don't like it in the least. I would much rather think that she was free to make her own life all by herself. I have made mine," she added triumphantly. "I might have married that man who made his fortune over an apple corer. I didn't: I married Raymond. That proves I was free!"

"Free to arrange the circumstances that threw those two men in your way? Oh, Elizabeth!"

"Free to choose which I would marry, anyhow!"

"And what determined your choice?"

"*Not* the behavior of my great-grandmother, Monica! Raymond would be furious if you told him that it was my great-grandmother who had accepted him!"

Once more Monica laughed. Then she spoke as though giving utterance to a carefully thought out conclusion.

"I would not take the ultimate responsibility of my life for anything," she said. "Be a little merciful to your daughter, Elizabeth."

"You've got hold of a heresy," said Elizabeth, frowning as she settled the sleeping baby comfortably in her lap. "Two heresies—'one sure if another fails'! What do you *call* your—'mistake'?" she added teasingly. "Has it a name?"

"Seen from one side it might be called fatalism, but from the other it is free will."

"But those are two opposites! Which of them is true?"

"True! True! My dear," cried Monica, "as Mrs. Gubbins would say, 'There, mum, you *have* me'! They are *both* of them as near to the truth as anything can get!"

"Oh!" Elizabeth stretched out her arms hopelessly, while the baby burrowed deeper between her knees. "You are too strenuous for me, dear Monica, I am going to quiet you with tea. Nurse may have Ruth now."

When the tea had been cleared away, Elizabeth sat alone upon the Terrace leaning back lazily against the cushions of a basket chair. Monica had disappeared into her own room. She was leaving Templeton Manor that evening to pay a visit in the neighborhood and was timed to arrive for dinner.

At Templeton the Terrace was very wide—so wide that it was almost a garden, with lavender, rosemary, and other sweet-smelling things growing in trim beds. It was bounded on one side by the house, and on the other by the river which passed beneath it, swift and silent, dragging in its flow the long water-weeds that strained to follow its journey. Kingcups edged its

banks, and beyond them were fields yellow with paler cowslips, and beyond the cowslips were gray trees and a delicate sky. Although the mystery of evening was preparing to descend, earth still lay golden in the sunshine.

A passing sadness had fallen upon Elizabeth. The old distrust of life was aroused once more. She felt almost irritated with Monica. Monica was perpetually setting forth problems for which she could find no solution, and from Elizabeth's point of view a problem was only permissible if an answer, pleasant and fairly logical, was forthcoming from somewhere.

Also Monica's problems were always so inopportune—she did not realize—as did another preacher—that there is “a time to read and a time to sew; a time to keep silence and a time to speak.”

For instance, on the day of Ruth's christening, Elizabeth had sat playing with the pink toes of her baby, while the christening cloak and the other finery were being put away, and Monica had stood in front of them, a tall gray figure—“a fairy godmother,” Elizabeth had called her.

“You only want a broomstick and a black cat to make you perfect,” she said, looking up into the keen, smiling eyes, “Here is your godchild! A gift, please.”

Laughing, Monica touched the child; the tiny hand closed round her finger.

“Health you have,” she said slowly, looking down upon the soft fluffy head and the dimpled cheeks and neck of babyhood; “wealth you have; beauty——” she looked at the mother; “beauty you *will* have.”

Elizabeth caught up her baby. “For shame, for shame, my lamb, my precious, she says that you are not beautiful now!”

“No beauty was a beauty at the age of six weeks,” said Monica dryly.

Elizabeth drew herself up. “Continue,” she answered with a mock dignity, “Health, wealth, beauty! There is nothing left!”

“Yes, there is one thing more,” returned Monica. “In the words of the fairy tale, the best that I can do for you now, my dear, is to wish you—‘a little misfortune.’”

Lady Templeton held the child closely to her, "Monica," she said with a shade of real annoyance in her tone, "you are *not* amusing, you are intolerable, and," she added, smiling in spite of her wrath, "you had not even the excuse of the wicked fairy, for you were invited to the christening!"

This episode came back to Elizabeth now as she sat in one of the most beautiful corners of her home, the stately architecture of the house behind her, and in front a landscape flooded with light and color.

Why—a little misfortune? That was so like Monica! She had suffered—somehow, somewhere—and she thought it necessary for everybody to suffer too. Elizabeth knew that she was wrong. As flowers need sunshine, so human beings need happiness, beauty, love and joy to complete their perfection. Her little Ruth should have all these things, she should be shielded from all sin, all suffering. She should grow as a flower grows looking towards the sun. She would never have to bear even the unnecessary pain that Elizabeth herself had borne at the hands of a well-intentioned mother. She should live in the beauty of her home until she was old enough to change it for another, equally fair, equally holy, and for the companionship of an upright, honorable gentleman—just such another, thought Elizabeth, as her own father.

The mystery of evening deepened; a faint haze crept over the distance; the color of a bed of blue pansies changed to purple; one bat flew across the horizon.

"How beautiful! How beautiful!" said Elizabeth under her breath.

Soon she rose and walked towards the house. On the way she stopped to bury her face in a mass of double lilac that stood upon a table near the long window; then she walked softly across the room and behind her the trailing folds of her dress slipped silently over the parquetted floor.

She paused before an inlaid table on which lay her writing things, and a few of her choicest treasures—a photograph of her husband, a photograph of her child, a little locked silver box ornamented with opals and enamel, in which lay some of the most precious letters that Sir Raymond had written dur-

ing their engagement; a few books, bound, some in vellum, some in leather tooled in gold. There was a *Christian Year*, *Lyra Innocentium*, the *Letters of St. Catherine of Siena*, and some others.

She picked up one—*The Revelations of Divine Love*, and opened it, but instead of reading she found herself looking out upon the flowing river, just below her. At this point it turned and encircled the Terrace and part of the house, as a moat. How fair was this world of God's, how fair, how sweet! It was itself the revelation of Divine Love, and, now, even as on the first morning of creation, it was—very good. She shut the book; she wanted no external help to happiness. Her faith returned, the tiny shadow had drifted away. She was once more overflowing with love and with gladness. She sang a few bars of a song under her breath, and then walked gayly down the room and out into the gallery which ran the entire length of that wing of the house. Once more she had reached the little passage—a few steps up and then the nurseries.

II

"Do you know," said M. Féle on the evening of the day before yesterday, "why man is the most suffering among all creatures? 'It is because he has one foot in the finite and the other in the infinite and that he is torn asunder not by four horses, as in certain horrible times, but between two worlds.'"

Journal of Maurice de Guérin.

MEANWHILE earlier on the same afternoon Sir Raymond Templeton stood upon the boat that was gradually steering its way into Dieppe harbor. The usual crowd of shouting, waving people jostled each other upon the quay. Sunlight fell upon the white faces of the houses. Round the corner was the *plage* with the long line of hotels upon one side, and the longer line of blue water upon the other. Both were broken by the Casino, and Sir Raymond's thoughts were broken by what nestled beyond the Casino among the cliffs—a white villa whose gardens extended in terraces to the sea. While his eyes rested upon the crowd in front of him, his inward vision held something very different and something potent enough to pull an unusual furrow between his eyes. In fact his face was altogether pulled, as though he had braced himself overmuch to some strenuous and unaccustomed effort.

The crossing had been pleasant—hot sun, blue water and the lapping of foam-crested wavelets against the steamer—but Sir Raymond had seen none of it, his eyes and thoughts had been turned away all the time, and though many figures, including those of Elizabeth and Baby Ruth, had come and gone in the foreground as it were of his consciousness, there was the villa in the sinister dazzle of sunshine at the back.

Once he spoke out loud. "God, why are men such fools!"

He turned a letter about in his pocket and then, as though that were the cause of his discomfort, he tore it into fragments and threw them one by one into the sea.

"So goes that folly!"

His thoughts took words as the last white speck was sucked under. But whatever it was that he contemplated, it was not to be disposed of so easily. The pulled expression deepened and he tramped up and down the deck, full of sudden misgivings that were difficult, but not impossible, to overcome. One or two people looked at him—a handsome man, square jawed and firm, with no suspicion of weakness, except perhaps in the under lip and the indolent eyes; a man in whom many emotions may have done battle, but whose predominating quality seemed to be a self-consciousness that showed itself in reticence. And, indeed, even with himself, Sir Raymond was reserved, if not about all his virtues, at least about most of his faults. He knew that in the end no Templeton had ever done anything undignified or unbecoming, and therefore it was hardly necessary to consider undignified and unbecoming actions with reference to himself. He had lived as most men, and as most men had shed his follies—as a matter of fact, the last of these was at the present moment undergoing this deciduous process—and when once shed, so little did they occupy his thoughts, it would be fair to surmise that in ripe age he would be extremely doubtful as to the possibility of his ever having committed any. Perhaps owing to his wife's opinion of him, in which he was inclined to agree, that state of mind would have already begun to form itself, were it not for the circumstances of the present visit. The letter that he had destroyed, and many of the same kind that had pursued him through his honeymoon and afterwards during the blissful months of his early married life at Templeton Manor, had been as a weight upon the wings of his self-esteem.

"God!" he said, "why are men such fools!" Still there was to be an end to foolishness now—once for all. Rosalie de Winton was to be effectually silenced, and he looked forward to returning to Elizabeth and Templeton Manor free to follow in those paths of virtue for which in reality he had been pining all the time.

It was often a mystery to him how he ever came to commit the follies which other men found so easy and satisfying. Truly the "primrose path" was to him a most unpleasant pleasure.

Its charm lay entirely in some hidden impulse of the imagination, and over and over again when he had once set out actually upon its broad walk his thoughts, after their first madness, were occupied chiefly in considering the beauty of the strait gate of life and the fascination of the narrow, perilous passage. On his return, however, after the first enthusiasm of freedom, the enchantment got to work once more, and his imagination, throwing aside the sordid and boring reality, remembered something that never had existed, and pictured something else that was still less likely ever to be realized.

Now this was to be the *End*. His mind saw it written in capital letters. He was happily married to a saint among women to whom he stood for the sum of all human excellence. What could a man want more? What stronger incentive could he have to live a virtuous life? "Good women are like salt," said Sir Raymond, "they keep our lives sweet." And there was a proud humility in the thought that Elizabeth, his wife, could have been destined for so noble, so unique a lot.

When he had playfully discountenanced her adoration, telling her tenderly that he was not as good as she thought him, he had, he knew, spoken the truth. But then he was not ashamed of speaking the truth. When Sir Raymond Templeton was ashamed, he was proud of being ashamed. It raised him above the common rut of men who have not enough delicate feeling to be ashamed. Besides, by lowering himself, just sufficiently, he exalted his wife and this, in another way, redounded to his credit, for after all—was she not *his* wife?

However this was to be the end. The past, which Rosalie de Winton had helped to make, was dead. This journey was to be the stone rolled before a sepulcher that very soon would contain mere emptiness. Mere emptiness, indeed, for skeletons of the past remain entombed only as long as men's thoughts hold them there. Once these are withdrawn they skip airily away—theologians say, to await the arrival of their owners in another world. Perhaps; but it would be difficult to believe this about any past for which Sir Raymond Templeton was responsible. He would have forgotten it so completely that for all its clamoring and shrieking it would find it most difficult to

establish even a bowing acquaintance across the Styx. This past, however, in spite of healthy-mindedness and general optimism, would be a difficult one to dispose of. There was in this case an insuperable difficulty, and it was this difficulty that had pulled Sir Raymond's placid forehead into the furrow of a frown. Still he went with a cheque book in his hand, and in his heart, illimitable faith. He would make Rosalie de Winton a good allowance; also he would insure her life so that in the event of anything happening to her, provision would be forthcoming for her daughter Rose. Sometimes he thought of this same Rose with a genuine feeling of depression—something deeper than his becoming self-abasement—and in this depression he touched for the moment another plane. Still in the end optimism triumphed.

"Some there are who tell
Of One who threatens He will toss to Hell
The luckless pots He marred in making—Pish!
He's a Good Fellow and 'twill all be well."

Pish! He was a Good Fellow, and the world was a good place after all—the best of good places! His spirits attained their usual level. Besides if the thing were looked at judicially, Providence and Mrs. De Winton would be found to have been entirely responsible for Rose's existence. Such a thought would never have crossed Sir Raymond's mind. An illegitimate daughter—appalling! At the time he had been both shocked and hurt when Mrs. De Winton made him acquainted with her news.

But as to Rose herself! He took comfort. She might have been a good deal worse off than she was. Of course the fact of her mother was against her. He was afraid that nobody would deny that—he sighed at the thought of it. But then—on the father's side? The sigh dropped, clearly he had done the very best he could for the child. It would be impossible that she should grow up without *some* sense of virtue and decency and right living. Imagine if she had been fathered by anyone else—the sort of man that Mrs. De Winton naturally inclined to for instance! What chance could she have had? He grew

almost indignant at the thought. Deeply wronged by the mother, who being what she was, had no business at all to have brought her into the world, Rose would still inherit tendencies towards virtue, and—well, Sir Raymond Templeton had done the best he could for Rosalie de Winton's child. Could Lady Templeton, his wife, by any possibility have become for one instant a dispassionate onlooker Sir Raymond was positive that she would have said the same. It was a complication in his life but he faced it bravely.

And now the time had come for him to land: already the stone had moved in the direction of that futile sepulcher.

III

"Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned: or can one walk upon hot coals and his feet not be scorched?"

Proverbs

SEEN through half-shut eyes, or framed by finger and thumb, the view from the veranda of the Villa Sans Souci gleamed—"a very opal." The villa itself was white, the sky and the sea were blue, while between the two the rose garden shone with a vibrant flush of color, splashed here and there with crimson. Over all there brooded a mysterious haze of milky light in which particles of sunshine seemed to have consolidated into dim dust, which, wrapping about the whole, softening the fire of red and clouding the blue with gold, justified the simile of the opal. Oleanders bloomed upon the veranda, and more roses; and among the roses, half sitting, half lying upon the cushions of a rose-colored couch bloomed Rosalie de Winton herself. Imagine, then, at the burning heart of the opal—Rosalie de Winton, the focus of all color. Imagine her eyes blue as the sky and the sea, imagine her mouth—I compare it shamefacedly to roses—imagine her plump white shoulders gleaming under that travesty of clothing—a tea gown.

Rosalie de Winton had a visitor. Old Lord Berkhamstead leaned back from the cushions of the lounge opposite and surveyed her for some moments in silent approval. At last he spoke:

"Stunning!"

"What?" said Rosalie, cocking her chin, while a little pleased smile hovered her mouth. To Rosalie de Winton admiration was the breath of life. "What?" she said, and waited.

"That—er—wrapper."

"Oh, tea gown!" she corrected.

She picked up some of the lace and fingered it. The touch seemed to rouse in her a new emotion. After a hunger for

admiration, a passion for dress—and for the means of acquiring it—was the strongest instinct that Rosalie possessed.

"It is nice," she said, "isn't it?" Again she cocked her head, trying to look at her own shoulders. "Out of the way, isn't it, eh? I can't bear anything common."

"Oh, no," returned Lord Berkhamstead, shocked.

"Well, I didn't mean exactly *common*, you know, I meant—ordinary. I can't bear anything ordinary. I must have the best—the best that's made, mind you, or I won't have it at all. I am quite ready to pay for it—*anything*—but I must have it—I should die if I didn't have it—or at all events I should be quite ill!"

"Poor dear!" interpolated Lord Berkhamstead.

"That's what I call being thorough." Again Rosalie leaned back among her cushions, but she still fingered the lace.

"You don't know what I paid for this," she said meditatively. "I paid—whew!" she dropped the lace and whistled.

"Well, you *don't* know!"

"Don't I?" said the old man with a sudden cluck.

"I bet you don't! At least——" Suddenly she laughed. "Perhaps you do."

Lord Berkhamstead disclaimed the knowledge, waving a yellow hand. "Not now, my dear Rosalie, not now—but I *did*—I did." Suddenly his suppressed clucks broke into a hissing chuckle. He was always immensely tickled by Rosalie. Her stolidity delighted him. His cheeks creased into a thousand wrinkles, the water rushed into his light eyes,—a lump on his neck moved up and down in the exuberance of his mirth.

"Your wit, my dear, is as surpassing as your penetration. Will you not allow me to order you a sister—er—tea gown to the one you have on?"

Rosalie's laughter had died down. She knew Lord Berkhamstead for the most careful of her acquaintances. He had haggled with cabmen outside her door. Her tone was contemptuous.

"You jolly well don't know what you're talking about," she said with decision.

"Oh, he, he, adorable piece of Rahat-Lakoum, won't you give me a chance of finding out?" said Lord Berkhamstead, wiping his eyes. "Come, now, what did it cost?"

"It cost—it cost," she paused, "well it cost enough to keep the whole show going for a year."

"The show! What show? Do you mean the shop where you bought it?"

"Yes, the shop. It came from a Penitentiary—a place called 'A House of Mercy.' Yah!" Rosalie popped out a little pink tongue.

"A Penitentiary! Good Lord!" For one instant Lord Berkhamstead was startled; the thing was so bizarre it was almost uncanny, and yet it was as hard to associate such uncanniness with Rosalie as it would have been to think weirdly of a treacle pudding. He recovered and straightened himself.

"How on earth——" he began, and then paused wondering.

"Marie got it for me," said Rosalie simply. "No one can make lace as they make it at those places. She takes my patterns with her. They are glad enough to get the work, bless you. It helps them to entice a few more poor girls into their prison."

"You give—them—the patterns!" Lord Berkhamstead was almost breathless.

"You bet I do!" returned Rosalie scornfully. "You don't suppose they thought of *this* for themselves? It would take that fat Mother Superior a year of saints' days to think of anything so *chic*. Look at that ducky little bit of insertion at the back!" Rosalie turned among her cushions. "Isn't it *perfectly* lovely?" Her face dimpled with an angelic sweetness as she spoke.

"Perfectly lovely!" echoed Lord Berkhamstead. "Go on about the—er—the Penitentiary, it interests me. Are the—er—nuns—good needlewomen?"

"Yes," said Rosalie viciously, "wicked things!"

"Why are they—er—wicked?"

"I have already told you. They entice poor girls away from their homes and—well they are never seen any more."

"What do you suppose happens to them?"

Rosalie shrugged her shoulders. "I don't suppose that they are murdered," she said, "although upon my word I shouldn't wonder. They are shut up and starved, anyway. They have to spend their lives in saying prayers and making things like this. Such places ought not to be allowed; they should be raided by the police."

"They spend their time in making things like this, when they might be wearing them, instead, eh?"

"Perhaps," returned Rosalie. "But there, no one ever knows one's luck—it's up one minute and down the next. What's the matter?"

Berkhamstead's face twitched. He changed color, getting redder. He jerked. Then with a loud gurgle the laugh was fired. Soon twitching of the surface began again; the water poured from his light eyes. He looked irresistibly comic. Rosalie could not help joining in his laugh, and together they guffawed, he at her, and she at him.

"Do stop, you silly old thing!" she cried at last, breathless. "You've made me ache awfully. You are enough to make a cat laugh."

"Ah, dear lady," said the old man, dabbing his eyes and still shaken by a parting giggle. "You are the wittiest creature God, or the devil, ever made. You are incomparable. You sit there and you evoke the most poignant contrasts—the strangest antitheses, and you talk about it all as if it were—mutton. Oh, my beautiful Rosalie, if you could only realize yourself!

"I don't know what you are driving at now," said Rosalie, once more shaking herself comfortable. The old man was idiotically silly. She wished he would go. "I don't talk about anything as if it were mutton. I don't know what you mean. I only declared that Penitentiaries were wicked places and ought to be raided by the police—and so they ought to be. I said, too, that you were a silly old thing," she continued playfully, "and so you are."

"I am, I am," said Lord Berkhamstead, rising to go. "You, dear lady, are as wise as you are witty, and more beautiful even than you are wise. No, no, don't, don't decline my compliments. Don't break my heart, for I must tear myself away.

Alas, Rosalie—Lilith—Helen of Troy—de Winton, sweet enchantress, delicate delight—I must tear myself away! Your humble slave must wrench himself from you. You won't allow him to order you a—er—tea gown at a Penitentiary! You imply that he is too old! What can he do but go in sack-cloth after such a rebuff?"

"Do shut up," said Rosalie, tittering. "I declare, I'll box your ears!"

"Witty as ever!" cried Lord Berkhamstead.

Rosalie extended a hand and he, bending over it, kissed the finger tips, then with many flourishes he bowed himself away.

As he made his exit a child toddled from a door at the further end of the balcony; soft, fair, blue-eyed, she was the mother in miniature. For a moment she looked about her, and then her attention was caught by a box of chocolates that stood upon the stone rail of the balcony at some little distance from where Rosalie lounged. She made straight for the sweets.

"Choc-choc," she said, pursing a tiny mouth. "Rose likes choc-choc."

From waving a last laughing adieu to his old lordship, Mrs. de Winton turned. The unexpected sight of the child startled her.

"Why don't they keep Rose in her room?" she thought irritably. She watched the eager, uncertain steps—it was easy to see in what direction they were bound, and laughed suddenly—she could not help it, there was so much anxiety in the blue eyes, so much resolution in the tiny mouth. Half angry, half amused, Rosalie recognized here something of herself.

"No, no, my lady," she said aloud, "you don't get those sweets! Don't touch, Baby—come to mother; those chocolates are not for you."

After one lightning glance the child deliberately turned away. "Choc-choc," she said, hurrying on. "Rose wants choc-choc."

The inevitable anger, kindled by any opposition to her will, glared in Rosalie's eyes. "Rose!" she cried, her voice lifted to a shout, "Rose!"

Rose knew nothing of obedience; she was deaf to her mother's threatening tones, and by this time she had reached her goal: she raised both hands and plunged them into the box which stood just above her, tipping it up in her eagerness. Some of the sweets fell into the garden, others rolled upon the stone floor.

In Mrs. de Winton languor was replaced by furious, blazing rage. As undisciplined as her three-year-old child, the impulse of the moment, whatever it might be, swayed her always to the full, and her denunciations of a recalcitrant tradesman were as passionate and magnificent as those hurled at a faithless lover. She sprang up now, her hand raised to strike.

The child turned, met her eyes, and crouched, shrieking, before her; she also was caught in a paroxysm of rage—but it was rage mingled with fear.

"Go 'way," she gasped, "go way! Pig! Dog! Devil!"

Rosalie, white with fury, trembled. "How dare——," the words died upon her lips. She seized the child in both hands, lifted and shook her violently. The child screamed, but Rosalie screamed louder. She had found her voice. "I'll teach you! I'll teach you to call your mother names!"

A spasm seized the child; she shrieked in gasps, and fought and clawed like a little tiger cat. Suddenly she felt her mother's hand, soft but vicious, high up upon her shoulder, and with a quick instinct for self-preservation—Rosalie had been very violent—she turned her head and, ducking, fixed her teeth, with all the strength she had, into the white flesh.

"Ah!" Rosalie wrenched herself away. She did not spare her words. Hell was let loose. She held the child with one hand while with the other she showered blows upon its face and head. It crouched, holding up baby hands to save itself. But passion had its way with the mother; it whirled her into she knew not what. As the child shrieked, so her fury grew. For the moment she was mad. "Pig!" she cried, and struck. "Dog!" She struck again. "I'll teach you to 'devil' me!"

She knew nothing, heard and saw nothing; she was drunk as with strong wine.

Suddenly she felt herself pinned from behind. Unannounced,

somebody had strolled on to the veranda. Rage died on her lips. Fear dazed her; she turned in sudden weakness to face—Sir Raymond Templeton.

"Are you mad?" he said in a low voice. "I heard the child screaming from the road. Do you want to murder her?"

"She was naughty," replied Rosalie sulkily, pulling herself away from his grasp. "She bit my finger. I had to punish her." She sat down on the couch heavily, sucking her hand.

Sir Raymond lifted the child; its head dropped upon his shoulder, the breath came in short pants, the hair was matted with perspiration; the little girl was nearly exhausted. He carried her towards the house. At the door she roused herself to look towards her mother. Then, gathering all her remaining strength to one last blow, "Devil," she whispered harshly. She had no voice left. After she had spoken, she caught her breath, for the paroxysms of sobbing still continued. "Devil!" Once more came the whisper, and then she had passed through the glass door.

When Sir Raymond returned he found Rosalie in her drawing room sobbing.

Scenes of altercation, whether in drama or literature, are better omitted. They leave the spectator irritated, with jangling nerves. They are neither comedy nor tragedy, for in the detail of a sordid quarrel there is as little mirth as pity, as few honest smiles as there are tears. Perhaps devils laugh at such things, and perhaps angels weep, but for us who are merely human they are no more than an annoyance. We are hardened; they do not move us.

And the scene as Sir Raymond had pictured it to himself while crossing from Newhaven to Dieppe was neither more nor less than the inevitable vulgar quarrel which is the inevitable vulgar climax of a vulgar relationship. And it turned out at first pretty much as he had anticipated. Rosalie raved and shrieked and wept; her pink cheeks turned crimson and her blue eyes flashed blue fire; she accused him of betraying her honor with false promises, and of throwing her and her child to the mercy of a savage world. She talked and wept inces-

santly, only pausing now and again to blow her nose. And it was in one of these pauses that Sir Raymond repeated what he had said many times before, that Mrs. de Winton would be well provided for and that her daughter Rose, upon reaching the age of twenty-five (or earlier, should her mother die), would come in for a considerable amount of money.

"Ah," said Rosalie, "and what about my peace of mind?"

As there was no answer to be made to this question, Sir Raymond was silent. Peace and Rosalie de Winton had, at any time, little enough in common.

But Rosalie expected a retort; not getting it she lay back among her cushions and sobbed noisily.

Sir Raymond had done all he wanted to; he thought that he might now take his leave.

"You will hear from my solicitor to-morrow," he said. "Barnes will do everything." He pushed back his chair and stood up, drumming his fingers nervously upon the table. "If you want anything, you can write to me through him, but if you send any more letters to Templeton Manor or to any other private address, your allowance stops, you—er—understand. Everything is arranged." After a moment's hesitation Sir Raymond help out his hand. "Good-by."

Rosalie did understand. Weeping was useless; besides, there was no longer any pleasure in it; her passion had spent itself. She dried her eyes and put away her pocket handkerchief. Then she drew a chair to the table, tucked up the tail of her tea gown, and sat down.

"You don't go yet," she said, tapping the table with a be-diamonded hand. "*Nothing* is arranged. We haven't begun."

"Well, I have told you all that I intend doing," replied Sir Raymond bluntly.

"But I have not told you anything of what *I* intend doing," returned Rosalie. "Kindly sit down again and let us understand one another."

Sir Raymond stared. Here indeed was Rosalie in a new light. Her very accent was changed, and for the moment her

speech rose from loose slangy phraseology to the incisive curt-ness of the man of business who has the advantage of his client and who means to drive a hard bargain. There was no haggling here, no grumbling, no weakness, no tears. Mistress of the situation, she handled it with a finesse that amounted to genius. At every point she checked him. She had played this game before, but never for such stakes or with such supremacy. Never before had she played it with a child as a trump card. She knew his hand, but he, further than being aware of her obvious advantage, was in the dark as to her resources. He did not know how free she was to make her own terms. She was entirely free, for, being Rosalie de Winton, she had made hay in the morning—the time when all right-minded people should work—and her various investments were already bringing her in a very fair income. She could live comfortably without his help; she was in a position to refuse him everything he asked of her—her silence first of all. She knew it, and the thought was as sweetness on her tongue and as a sword in her fair right hand.

When Sir Raymond rose to go for the second time, her humor was angelic; she had robbed him shamelessly. She relaxed the unaccustomed tension. Her voice took on its habitual tone; her easy slang returned. She had consumed her mouse and was once more the sleek, purring pussy cat whose pretty feet have no claws and whose utmost desire is to have its handsome head admired and scratched.

"You can't do me," she said at last, smiling complacently at him through her blue eyes.

How he loathed the sight of her beauty! For him, indeed, it had gone rotten.

"I'm as keen as mustard when I'm put to it," she went on; "and—well, you made conditions, didn't you? You made conditions to me—a lonely woman." Business over, she was once more free for sentiment. "Remember, Raymond," her eyes filled with tears, "I am quite alone! I—and the little, little child!"

"Is that all?" said Raymond grimly. Her fair presence

made him sick. "A moment longer—and you'd have done for the little—*little* child," he added under his breath.

She was up in arms, ready, as always, for a wordy war.

"That's right," she said glibly, "insult me! Call me a murderess. You are safe! I am a woman! I cannot shoot or horsewhip you!"

"My God!" said Sir Raymond Templeton.

Then he pulled himself together. It was nearly over. He stood apart, as it were, from his anger and from her, and laughed. "A lady of pleasure!" Pleasure! What were the whips of an unfulfilled desire to the scorpions wielded by Rosalie! Still—it was nearly over.

"I think that is all," he said for the second time, "Isn't it? I have agreed to the greater part of your exorbitant demands. I will now, if you will permit me, take my leave."

"Yes," replied Rosalie cheerfully. "There's nothing more to settle!" His reference to her victory jerked her from resentment into a good humor. "Stay, though," she smiled upon him sweetly. "You don't mind sitting down and putting all that we have settled into writing—do you?"

"Certainly I do," replied Sir Raymond. "You will hear from Barnes to-morrow. That is enough!"

"Ah, but mayn't I have a little letter to-day?" pouted Rosalie; "just a little something to go on with! It's safer, isn't it? One never knows what may happen."

Still he demurred. She got the pen and held it towards him. "Please," she coaxed. "You see I am only a——."

"Stop, for mercy's sake!" cried Sir Raymond. "I *know* you are."

He wrote the letter while she stood at his side and waited. Then she read it through carefully from beginning to end, folded it, and put it into its envelope.

"Thank you," she said simply.

At parting she proffered a hand and he, with a sudden up-bubbling of charity, took it. He was quit of her. The world was already a fairer place. She had robbed him—there was no doubt about that—she had goaded him into a discourtesy

unbecoming a Templeton. Still, once it was not so; four years was a long time, and she—well, poor thing, poor thing!

She noted his change of mood, but did not guess the reason. How should she? Vanity barred her vision to the most obtrusive fact. Once more she became soft and dewy and child-like. "Good-by," she said, and made as though she would have lifted her pretty mouth. "Good-by, Raymond; I forgive you *everything*!"

In a sudden panic he pulled away from her.

"It's all right," he said shortly, his hand upon the door handle. "It's all right, Rosalie. Good-by. Keep straight."

He was gone.

She picked up the letter he had written her and put it into her bureau. She turned the key in the lock. Then she ran to the window. He was still to be seen. She kissed her hands and waved her scarf to the retreating figure. But the little graceful expression of good feeling was thrown away. He never even looked back.

Sir Raymond walked quickly. A wild exultation had taken possession of him—an overmastering delight. He was ready to sing, to shout, or to clap his hands. He was astonished at his own exuberance. He—Sir Raymond Templeton, Baronet, of Templeton Manor—staid, reserved, undemonstrative; could this creature really be he? If, four years ago, meeting with Rosalie had filled him with emotions, parting with Rosalie was still more satisfying.

But why, he questioned, had he not broken with her before? Why had he not put an end to the thing before his wedding day? Why? It was inexplicable. Could it have been mere indolence? Could it have been that he did not dare face her? It was nearly two years since he last set eyes upon her. What was it? Some strange contradiction in him, perhaps, that longed to be rid of her and yet hesitated before a final rupture? Who can say? He could not say himself! Day by day the power of Elizabeth had grown stronger and the desire weaker that linked him to Rosalie, until at last the ascendancy of Lady Templeton was so complete that—for her sake, so

he told himself, as well as for his own—he was inspired to face the discomfort of the channel, with the chance of seasickness, and the peril of the last interview with Rosalie.

And now it was over! His feet were free to return where his heart had already gone before—to Templeton Manor—to his wife, his child, his home.

He hungered for a sight of the steamer that would take him back to England.

IV

"Guilt was a thing impossible to her
For she had lived
In this bad world as in a place of tombs
And touched not the pollutions of the dead."

S. T. COLERIDGE

SIR RAYMOND crossed by the night boat and hoped to arrive at Templeton in time for breakfast. In the summer Elizabeth breakfasted in the garden. She loved the morning sun and the morning thrushes and blackbirds. Her table was laid in a shady spot on the opposite side to the Terrace, but from where she sat, by leaning forward, she could still see the river. Behind her tall larkspurs flashed their vivid blue upon the green, and the bright eyes of veronica opened at her feet. Her white dress took its shadows from her surroundings—shadows of green and of the palest mauve. She made a picture in cool colors.

Now that Monica had left, she was alone; other guests were expected to arrive in the evening, but she had this one day to herself. She longed for Raymond to return to enjoy with her the delicious sense it brought her of freedom and of solitude. She was entirely happy. Every breath she drew was a joy. She was grateful for everything. The world moved to her. The servants even, it seemed, were inspired by motives of personal affection. She smiled her thanks to the old butler, and praised the size of the strawberries that lay in a white dish upon the breakfast table. A small Skye sat begging at his mistress's feet, while a collie pushed a black nose into her hand with a little whine and wriggle of delight.

"Good-morning, Bess," said Elizabeth, "have you slept well?" The deep brown eyes of the dog leapt to the sound of her name, she nuzzled her face against Elizabeth's arm, giving her dress soft nips of affection. "Dear, beautiful Bess," said Elizabeth, "you can nearly talk."

The old butler brought her a breakfast dish from a little

table that, standing against a bank of roses, did duty for a sideboard.

"How nice breakfast is!" thought Elizabeth, "How hungry I am!"

"I will have one of those brown rolls, Wilkes," she said aloud, "and some honey. I can reach the strawberries when I want them quite well, thank you. You need not wait."

"Thank you, m' lady," replied the old man.

So the moments passed. Elizabeth opened her pile of letters and read them one by one, with long intervals between each, when she forgot them and her breakfast and leaned back in her chair to drink in the marvelous sweetness of the morning.

At last she sighed, "Oh, if only Raymond were here!"

As though in answer to her wish, the tall, gray figure of Sir Raymond Templeton appeared suddenly in the long window of the morning-room. He looked worn out—tired and dusty. With a glad cry Elizabeth jumped up and ran towards him.

"A fairy heard my wish, Raymond!" she cried. "I conjured you here! Indeed, I did!"

She would have kissed him, but he held her at arm's length. "I decline to be embraced in this condition," he said, laughing. "Let me go and wash and change, and then——"

"Oh," she pouted, "Ulysses would never have thought of that!"

Laughing, he caught her to him. Ah, the wonder of her, the freshness, the fragrance! All the beauty of the morning lay here clasped in his arms.

As he bathed and changed into other clothes, he wondered what he would say to her about his journey. She knew that he had gone to bid an old friend good-by, a friend of his bachelor days whom she had never met, but who was going to settle in Africa, or in some other far out-of-the-way place—never to be seen again. Sir Raymond hoped devoutly that at least it might be true!

He need not have bothered himself. Elizabeth hardly referred to the object of his visit. His carefully thought out detailed story (Sir Raymond always paid attention to minutiae) was not necessary. His wife asked a few questions, but scarcely

listened to the answers. Everything was lost sight of in her joy at having him at home again. After breakfast, a few letters, a short interview with the agent, and Sir Raymond was free to come to her. They spent the morning together in wandering through the gardens, picking flowers like children, now reading to one another, now talking, or sitting hand in hand in silence. Elizabeth's cup was full. Never had her husband been more her lover than he was this day. It was once more the honeymoon. Never had she been so full of happiness. Her joy brought with it tears of thankfulness. Ah, to be worthy of such a love! To be worthy! That was her unspoken prayer.

And when the day had, like other beautiful things, passed away; husband and wife stood at a window looking out over the moonlit Terrace. All its color was sleeping now; it shone gray in the pale light. They looked at it in silence. Elizabeth slipped her hand into her husband's.

"This is the window where I say my prayers," she said. "I say them better here than in the bedroom. I like to look out at the sky and to feel the silence sink into me. I like to think that I am part of it. It rushes through me and washes me free of all the pettiness and triviality of the day. It is like a great joy or a great sorrow—only that it is always there, and if one wants it, one can find it. It"—she dropped her voice—"is like God."

As her husband did not reply she leaned her cheek against his. "*This* has been like a prayer, hasn't it?" she whispered; "just to stand here—together—you and me—in silence."

He could not answer her; he turned and kissed her on the forehead.

Then they stole into a faintly lighted room, tip-toeing; and the nurse, hearing a movement, came from the inner nursery and pulled aside the curtains of the cot. There lay the infant in the perfection of its beauty—wonderful—a miracle—the very sign and sacrament of love. The woman withdrew and the father and mother stood together, looking down upon the child.

Then they left the room, softly closing the door. Not a word had been spoken. The prayer at Elizabeth's heart went up uninterrupted.

In another room at the top of a villa in Dieppe there lay another child, older, but still a baby, sleeping the same rosy sleep, smiling the same smile of unconscious innocence. From below came the sound of a woman singing a melody, broken now and again by a man's laugh. Rosalie was entertaining old Lord Berkhamstead. The child did not stir; she was accustomed to noise; she had slept peacefully through nights of wilder revelry than this. She lay with her head thrown back and one arm outstretched, more beautiful than the infant, more mature,—a little child of three years, wonderful, a miracle, and—"not born, but damned into the world."

Did the same angel that watched the sleep of Ruth look also upon Rose? Who can say? Behind the love and the folly of men and women broods the Eternal Justice, and although one child may find in this world the blood and sweat and tears of Hell, and the other the fair vision of the love of Heaven—*"His ways are not our ways, neither are His thoughts our thoughts."*

BOOK I

Chapter One

"The moan of doves in immemorial elms."

TENNYSON

IT is only in the poet's mind that Time has an artist's faculty. We read that the fairness of old faces is comparable to that of ancient lace—or to the wonder of autumn. "Tender tints of fading." How exquisite on paper! How dismal in reality!

And yet indeed some old faces are more beautiful than some young ones—but it is only the poet among us who discovers it. He sees them through the mists of time. He knows by what tools—griefs, joys, and disappointments—new lines have been sculptured and old contours changed; and his view is perhaps the true one—the view of the angels. But it is not the view of that incarnation of the commonplace—the world. The world expresses itself in phrases and forms itself on phrases. Therefore, to the world, Elizabeth Templeton had, in the last twenty years, "gone off." It was true that her hair had lost its brightness and her eyes their light. But the wistfulness of her expression had deepened, and the likeness to the faded Botticelli in the room that had once been Ruth's nursery was more marked than ever. Elizabeth was forty. Dr. Trelling declared that she was as beautiful as her daughter Ruth; more beautiful than in the old days when as a boy he had spent some part of every holiday at Templeton Manor. But then the poet who lives in every man for a longer or shorter period, as the case may be, was not yet dead in Robert Trelling, and perhaps it was the glamour of the past romance that blinded him to the fact that Elizabeth was *passée*. She had always figured in his life—romantically. He had brought more than one boyish escapade to her to be dealt with, and she had never failed in sympathy. Indeed, now that he had become a man and had put away childish things, he still thought that her

photograph—given to him some thirteen years ago—was the most precious thing that he possessed. That photograph was once a new one and he an undergraduate, and then it had stood in the place of honor upon his chimney-piece. Once during a supper party when, loud-voiced, tipsy, and ridiculous, he had looked up suddenly and met Elizabeth's gentle eyes fixed upon him, he had caught the photograph and thrust it, face downwards, into a drawer. Then he had turned, blustering, to the company and had threatened to knock down the first man who dared to laugh. The whole room laughed, it pealed, it exulted: things happened, and the next day he had an aching and diminished head. Afterwards, at wines, Elizabeth was put into her drawer early in the evening and was not brought out again until she could be supposed to look with pleasure upon a serious man reading for a first.

But all this was very long ago. There was seven years difference in age between Elizabeth and Robert—this in youth is a lifetime—and thirteen years on the other side between Robert and Ruth. One woman looked upon him as a son (when Elizabeth was a young wife he had been a small boy leaving a preparatory school), the other, had she paused to define the sentiment, as a father. He knew himself to be the contemporary of both. Ruth credited him with the burden of years and of wisdom that nineteen assigns to thirty-three, but in her eyes he was merely the distinguished doctor, her mother's friend, grave, absorbed in his work, and, as far as she was concerned, cold, condescending, and a little critical. He would have flinched could he have heard this category of his qualities. To Elizabeth, he was all she would have desired her son—her only son—to have been. His letters—they corresponded regularly—never failed to bring smiles to her lips and color to her cheeks. Ruth teased her about this correspondence, and Elizabeth bridled at her raillery until one day they discovered that their unconscious mirth had annoyed Sir Raymond, and then teasing and letters ceased altogether. That Ruth's words should have hurt Sir Raymond was not extraordinary, but it hurt Elizabeth to think of it.

The boy Robert Trelling, the son of an old friend, had stayed

at Templeton Manor many times—he was the only boy who had, for Sir Raymond Templeton had no son of his own, and his brother's child, Hugh Chrysostom Templeton, was, as the heir apparent, not much to Sir Raymond's liking. That no son had been born to Templeton was a bitter disappointment and, contrary to the spirit of his usual optimism, Sir Raymond regarded it as a malicious personal injury wantonly inflicted upon him by the Almighty. But Elizabeth felt that she, too, had been to blame, and she bowed her head before the uttered commentary. Time had not improved Sir Raymond. His reserve had turned into silence, his self-respect into vanity, and his optimism into positive cruelty where the welfare of his fellow creatures was concerned. He objected on principle to organized charity. He refused to think that anyone could be less fortunate than himself—less good was, of course, a different matter, but, as he hopefully argued, a man's happiness lay in himself, and if a man was not virtuous and contented it was, save in the matter of progeny, his own shortcoming. A great national disaster raised scarcely a ripple upon the surface of his complacency.

"These things are always grossly exaggerated," he declared. "I don't suppose, now, this business that everybody is shrieking about to-day is nearly so bad as it is reported. Newspapers must live, you know."

Elizabeth listened with downcast eyes. Gradually, in the watches of the night, with salt and silent tears—she had come to realize her husband, to realize him more fully than he had ever realized himself. And yet—wonder of wonders!—she still loved him. The consequence was a steady deepening in her of a life below the surface, a life that brought her close to her old friend, Monica Holden. She still loved her husband, but she had ceased to look to him for any response. Love to Sir Raymond had become a word—the habit of the married man: also he had little concern with anything so impalpable. But even in this she discovered for herself the paradox of life—that the reward of love, as the reward of all else, lies with the giver. It took her nearly twenty years to achieve this knowledge, and the hidden pain of those years, the heart-

break and the silence, were known to none but herself. Her friends saw the fruit of such pain in the increased sweetness of her face, in her deepened penetration and widened sympathies; but only one person in the world had even an inkling that the roses on Lady Templeton's path made painful walking. This one person was her daughter Ruth, whose open eyes desired truth more than all else in earth or heaven. To the rest of mankind, including Robert Trelling, Elizabeth lived under cloudless skies surrounded by beauty and by love. And so in fact she did, but the beauty and the love were of her own making. Ruth never questioned her mother—she watched and wondered.

One day Elizabeth was sitting upon the Terrace in her old place busy with an embroidery frame. Her eyes were red, for Sir Raymond at some trifling annoyance had disappeared within his impregnable fortress—silence. Elizabeth's attempts at conciliation had not reached him. Ruth sat opposite to her, and Elizabeth felt her gaze. She grew restive.

"Well, darling," she said at last, "what are you thinking about?"

Ruth clasped her knees, leaning forward: "I am thinking that I would give anything to have been at your wedding."

Lady Templeton laughed, relieved; it was not what she had expected.

"I said that to Mrs. Whitter once," Ruth went on, "and she declared that if I had been there, there would not have been a wedding at all. She meant something. What did she mean? I don't suppose that I should have been able to prevent it, though."

"Would you have wanted to prevent it?" said Elizabeth slowly.

"Yes," returned Ruth. She said no more.

But Elizabeth knew suddenly that a certain kind of selfishness cannot be glossed even to the eyes of innocence. She wondered if at the outset of life her schemes for Ruth's happiness were doomed to failure. She had hoped so fervently that nothing rough or discordant would ever break into the perfect harmony which she labored to create for her daughter.

But what could be done with a girl who had such clear eyes?

Mrs. Whitter, as Ruth's perplexity has shown, was back once more at Templeton Manor. Her banishment had lasted a long time—five years. But when Sir Raymond's optimism had become dimmed by his disappointment in an heir, Mrs. Whitter had been reinstated to enliven the tediousness of home life. Mrs. Whitter was young in those days—twenty-six at most—fair haired, pink cheeked, well groomed, and as sharp as a needle. She had positively leaped into society, aided by a rich husband and her own talents, and she was not even flustered or out of breath at the exploit. She discussed herself genially with anybody who would listen.

"People say that my talk is scurrilous," she announced to Elizabeth on the occasion of their first meeting.

"Oh, no!" put in Sir Raymond.

"But it's true," retorted Mrs. Whitter. "It is." She did not add that it accounted in part for her success.

Elizabeth was bewildered. Next day she looked up the word in the dictionary, but that did not help her. Afterward, in Mrs. Whitter's presence, she sat silent, for she never recovered from the first shock of surprise.

Also, Mrs. Whitter's Christian name, "Pansy," stuck in her throat. She could not bring herself to use it. Mrs. Whitter's friends had two other names by which their degree of intimacy (determined by social position or, failing that, by income) with the charming little lady could be gauged. The eligible women called her "Chinkie," and the eligible men—"Tom." But Elizabeth stuck even at the refined and sentimental "Pansy." In fact, Elizabeth stuck very often when talking to Mrs. Whitter. With no one else did she find conversation so difficult. She became stupid, although apparently with other people she could talk and talk well. One excellent judge in such matters had declared that Lady Templeton's voice was like music, and her humor was as subtle as an air by a great composer. But Mrs. Whitter thought that Lady Templeton was a fool, and Elizabeth knew it. Mrs. Whitter wondered what Sir Raymond thought; Elizabeth knew that he never thought

about her at all, and in this she knew more even than Mrs. Whitter.

This state of mutual antagonism was not conducive to confidences. Although she had now known Mrs. Whitter for a long time, Elizabeth had never breathed a word to her on the subject nearest her heart—Ruth and Ruth's future. And indeed beyond a vague ideal of something quite good and beautiful, with a possible husband, compact of all the virtues, hovering in the background (of late years he had receded somewhat, and his appearance had grown to resemble that of Robert Trelling rather than Sir Raymond Templeton), there was little in it that was tangible—nothing approaching to a design. Of that Elizabeth was incapable. But Mrs. Whitter was a match-maker. She described herself as "an innocent schemer for the happiness of others." She had married, in imagination, the several young women in whom, for various reasons, she had been interested, a dozen times—settled them in the country and in town, and established herself, also in imagination, as the confidante of each, a visitor always in request. With Ruth she felt this to be impossible, for the thing was arranged, or should have been arranged already. There was only one eligible man for Ruth—her cousin, Hugh Templeton. Yet when she alluded to the obvious future of that young lady, Sir Raymond appeared to be either unwilling to speak of it or else curiously dead to his daughter's interests.

They were upon the Terrace awaiting the arrival of the rest of the party for tea when Pansy led up to what was in her mind—Hugh Templeton. Elizabeth was driving, and Ruth had gone on the river with Robert Trelling.

"I wonder why they named him Chrysostom!" she said for a beginning.

"Because he has the gift o' gab," replied Sir Raymond.

"But he couldn't have had it when he was christened, could he?" After a pause she continued, "He needs a silent wife. Ruth is so serious. He and she will make an admirable couple."

"What!" cried Sir Raymond.

"Oh!" Mrs. Whitter shrugged petulant shoulders. "Don't

pretend that you've never considered the possibility of such a thing!"

"I have considered it often," replied Sir Raymond; "but I didn't think that you had."

"My dear friend! If I cared for Ruth at all, as I do most cordially—the child is charming—that is the first thing I should have wished for her. It is as plain as a pikestaff. She is so fond of Templeton; she has lived here all her life: it would break her heart to leave it."

Sir Raymond was silent.

"Why have you never cultivated Chrysostom?" inquired Mrs. Whitter.

"They call him Hugh."

"Hugh, then. Why have I never met him here?"

"In the first place, my brother lives at Biarritz, and in the second—frankly, I can't bear the fellow."

"How old was he when you saw him last?"

"Fourteen. He had just gone to Eton."

"My dear friend! Do you imagine that he is fourteen still?"

"No, but if I knew fourteen, I know twenty-nine. He was a slippery little devil in those days, black, clever, fluent——"

"Ah, Chrysostom!" murmured Mrs. Whitter. "His mother was an Irish woman."

"With an air."

"An air?"

"An air of insufferable superiority. He had a way of looking at one meditatively without speaking. He walked about the place then as if it belonged to him. 'Why don't you put coffee on that girl with the swan, Uncle Raymond?' (That exquisite Leda! It had just come from Italy.) 'She is so beastly glaring! Why don't you have a Pinery, Aunt Elizabeth? Darrell is eating his head off. When I have a place like this I shall have a Pinery!'"

Mrs. Whitter laughed. "How absurd to take the remarks of fourteen *au grand sérieux*, Raymond. They seem to me to be rather intelligent remarks; I might have made them myself. Was the child clever—in other ways?"

"Yes, if he felt inclined to be. It was all there. But he worked very little, for at that time my brother had a fit of wandering and he took the boy with him. He failed at school in a geography paper, I remember. 'I never know anything about a place unless I've been there,' he said. 'I wish they'd examine a fellow on hotels.' Ruth was four years old then and she toddled after him everywhere. Can you understand that I did not want to have such a promising youth about the place?"

"And since?"

"I have lost sight of him."

"Write and ask him to stay here. He is no longer fourteen. He is adorable."

"You know him, then?"

Mrs. Whitter nodded.

"What a woman you are, Tom! Why didn't you say so before?"

"You never asked me. You merely volunteered information."

"Well, what's he like?"

"You have described him—Chrysostom with an air! Lucifer—a fallen angel with the gift of soft speech! He has the features of a Greek, the figure of an Arab, and he looks best in a frock coat. He is an athlete—a blue, with brains! Imagine it! But think of his upbringing—a childhood in the *Pays Basque*, broken by journeys to the far East, Eton, Christchurch: then add Paris, Rome, Vienna, and Berlin—an intimate acquaintance with the diplomatic and artistic circles of the whole of Europe. Its languages, its *chroniques scandaleuses*, its *argot* on his tongue: its literature, its poetry, its art, its music, its drama at his finger tips. He is only twenty-nine, but he is writer, poet, artist, musician, dramatist, and *grand seigneur*. No other man can touch him—except perhaps his very near relation." She paused, but continued quickly: "Then for appearance, he has eyes, my dear Raymond, in which you drown yourself, a month——"

"In the name of common sense, Pansy, stop! You have been reading Ouida. You produce for me the ideal of the lady

novelist—what woman could resist him? Byron, D'Orsay, Bulwer Lytton, up to date."

Mrs. Whitter stamped her foot.

"No man can bear to hear the appreciation of another—and I qualified it, too! I did say—except!"

"That was considerate of you—for the rest, your description was nauseous. I consider——"

A shout from the river checked his words as Trelling slowly brought up the punt to the landing stage. Ruth sat with her arms full of yellow water lilies. She had twisted some round her hat and one tumbled among the masses of her dark hair. She called, and set free an arm to wave to them. Robert Trelling leaned forward and made some remark and Ruth laughed again.

Sir Raymond walked to the edge of the Terrace and Mrs. Whitter followed him.

"Forget my description if you didn't like it, Raymond," she said in a low voice, "but write to Hugh Templeton. See him for yourself. My opinion is"—she glanced at the couple in the boat—"that you have not a moment to lose."

The boat took some little time to unload, and then as Robert Trelling mounted the steps with a parasol in one hand and Ruth's flowers in the other Mrs. Whitter found time for a last word.

"Of course I exaggerated quite absurdly, Raymond. A woman always likes to hear her own voice; I deserved to be snubbed. Only get Elizabeth to write to Hugh Templeton tonight. As a matter of fact, you won't find anything tiresome or highfalutin about him, and he has got a sense of humor that I forgot to mention. Altogether he is uncommonly like you; much more like you than like his own father. He is the real thing—a Templeton to the backbone."

When Ruth and Dr. Trelling joined them Pansy's desire had been achieved. She was rewarded by a smile from the baronet, accompanied by a brotherly hand pressure in token of forgiveness.

"I wonder why I take so much trouble about other people's affairs!" said Pansy to herself.

Chapter Two

"I expect that woman will be the last thing civilized by man."

MEREDITH

IF Lady Templeton could watch the passing of time with serenity, the case of Rosalie de Winton was very different. Yet even while deploring her youth vociferously, she descanted upon her lovers, past and present, and her somewhat opulent charms; until her daughter Rose was forced to remind her of an increasing rotundity which filled Mrs. de Winton with uneasiness. Rose had become, at twenty-two, in spite of a certain naïveté, a woman of the world—her mother's world, be it observed, which was in very truth only half a world. But Rose had no power to silence Rosalie when she boasted of her past, nor had she the least influence over her at any other time. Nothing but death would silence Rosalie; no power less potent than the grave would influence her.

The Villa at Dieppe had long been forgotten. The de Wintons now rented a small house in Princes Street, Grosvenor Square. "It is so important to have a good address," said Rosalie. The upper part was let at a low rent to an old clergyman who officiated at one of the half empty churches in the neighborhood of Piccadilly. He was deaf and a little blind, so he and his wife lived peacefully in the upper part of the house, while the de Wintons occupied the first floor, ground floor, and basement. There were two front-door bells, an upper and lower, but as it was not necessary that the name of both occupants of the house should appear, the Rev. Peter Robins' name alone showed prominently upon a brass plate over the upper bell. Occasionally, however, in spite of this precaution, mistakes were made, and sometimes late at night Mrs. de Winton's visitors called up the Robins; but really it mattered very little for Rosalie had helped to engage Mrs. Robins' servants, and

even if the old clergyman and his wife knew little of their fellow lodgers, there was a happy understanding between everyone else in that house.

"A delightful arrangement," sighed Rosalie. "I have always been drawn to the church. My father's half-brother was a Baptist."

Mrs. Robins shared in her satisfaction. "Mrs. de Winton," she told her friends, "is a sweet widow. True, she never goes to church, but then she is a Roman Catholic, and I do feel that it is better to stay at home than to countenance idolatry in any form. Her state is, however, transitional. I am leading her gently towards the truth. I have given her a Churchman's Almanac, and she reads the lessons every day while her daughter Rose brushes her hair. She has the most exquisite hair—pure gold at the tips—really wonderful in a person of her age."

Rose had inherited her mother's beauty, although Rosalie never acknowledged it. She always declared that Rose was quite commonplace and needed to be very carefully dressed. But in spite of Rosalie, Rose was beautiful. She was shrewd also, and in a manner innocent, if a woman leading the life that Rose de Winton led could by any stretch of language be termed innocent. She carried with her a certain childishness belonging to the girl still in her teens. There was no hypocrisy about her, and she never lied. She was entirely uneducated. She had learned to read and write—how, she hardly knew; from various visits to Paris and Continental watering places she had picked up a little French—fluent and inaccurate, and a few sentences of German and Italian. She spelt as she thought fit, and interlarded her correspondence, when she had any, with French and Italian phrases arranged and spelt in the manner most pleasing to her at the moment. She had never had any teaching that she could remember. She picked up what she could get, and read every novel—provided it was not too difficult—that fell in her way. She had heard vaguely of William the Conqueror, Henry the Eighth, and Queen Elizabeth. She had visited Madame Tussaud's wax-works. She knew the capital of France because she had been

there, and she knew also the best place in Vienna to buy chocolates. This neglect of her daughter was, on Rosalie's part, bad policy; educated, Rose would have been twice as useful to her; but there was in Rosalie a curious indolence that in many cases frustrated designs masterly in their conception. If, however, the end was money, this lethargy vanished on the instant, but in any project more subtle than the immediate acquirement of hard cash it appeared as a stultifying influence. Eager at first, by degrees Rosalie drowsed over her ambition, whatever it might be, and at last forgot it altogether. This languor on one side and agility on the other grew with increasing years. She had, however, when Rose was a little girl, given her music lessons and she had paid well for them. She had gone to the best teacher in Europe, and each lesson had cost her five guineas until her blandishments had won over the professor, and then he had trained her daughter for nothing. Also Rose had been taught to dance—not drawing-room dancing—she had little use for such an accomplishment; the de Wintons knew nobody who entertained, and the only opportunity that Rose had for displaying this branch of her art was at some Casino, or Kursaal, in their trips abroad—but fancy dances, cachucas, scarf dances and such like. Her dancing master was full of praise.

"She is superb!" he would say; "a miracle! She handles her toes to perfection! Her dancing is—operatic! I can say no more. See her now—her waist like a starved grayhound, and her backbone—gone. Ah, on the stage she would excel! she would excel!"

"Some day," replied her mother significantly, in answer to the little girl's delighted and imploring glance, "some day—perhaps! But I think that we shall be able to do better than that."

To-night Mrs. de Winton was "at home" to her friends, and later in the evening Rose was to dance. Some half dozen men were already gathered in the little drawing room, and in addition to Rosalie (Rose had not yet made her appearance) there were three women—a Miss Stubbs, who passed under the name of Madame Gabrielle, Court Dressmaker; Marian

Williams, hair specialist; and Miss Laura Larose, an actress, who had come in straight from the theater as she was not wanted after the second act. Supper was laid in an inner room and the folding doors revealed a glimpse of a crowded table. There was no service, therefore everything necessary was at hand; nothing had been forgotten. Under the sideboard champagne stood cooling in an ice-pail; there was whisky, also various *apératifs*. The air was heavy with conflicting odors. A curious perfume that Rosalie affected, the basis of which was musk, lingered in the silk curtains; great pots of Madonna lilies threw out an incense that mingled strangely with tobacco, and the drinks themselves kept their distinctive qualities even in the midst of this redolent atmosphere. Rosalie rather enjoyed a party. She liked to show off her frocks to more than one person at a time; but the men she called her "best friends," the *crème de la crème* of her society, whose money helped to pay for them, never came to the parties. Perhaps they found them dull, or perhaps it did not interest them to meet the other men of her acquaintance. At all events, they preferred the conversation of Rosalie to that of her friends, and did not call when that lady was "at home." Boys from Oxford came, and now and again a disreputable old lord dropped in—a Bond Street psychometrist, a man on the stock exchange (or rather a man whose business was conducted outside the stock exchange), a Jew money-lender, an unqualified doctor who had somehow contrived to acquire an enormous fortune, or perhaps a company promoter whose dress clothes were perhaps conspicuously immaculate by contrast with his more personal attributes. Of such were Rosalie's guests. Recruits from all ranks were gathered here, recruits to the gigantic army of wastrels and swindlers who, meeting for the first time under her hospitable roof, stared at one another curiously, with a "and-what-the-devil-sort-of-a-rascal-may-you-be?" expression; men, and women, too, of the class who now, and again figure notoriously in the newspapers when something happens to send a sudden flashlight into that strange, dim, half world.

Rosalie's parties had not always been like this; in other days

it had been different. Rosalie had accepted the friends of each one of her *grands amis* in turn, and they, sure of meeting with one another, had frequented her rooms merrily, but now—well, it was different! *Autres temps, autres mœurs*. Anybody who dropped in now and would pay directly or indirectly for his entertainment was welcome.

To-night there was one man of all this company who stood apart from the rest, as a being of another world. His hair was black, but it had not the gloss of the Jew's; his back was straight and his clothes were as well cut as those of the South African financier, but there was about him an undefinable remoteness that, while it forced a certain restraint upon the whole party, attracted the women and alienated the men.

"Who's that?" whispered Larose to Marian Williams.

"Hush, he'll hear you. He's a Mr. Templeton; *such* a gentleman. He's just twice as much a gentleman as most gentlemen. My word he is a gentleman! He is a premier O, and no mistake!"

"Premier Row?" exclaimed Laura Larose.

"That's what I said!" retorted Marion. Her manner was defiant. "Don't you know a French expression when you hear one? It means of the first water—like a diamond."

"Oh!" exclaimed Miss Larose, "*première eau*."

"Yes, oh," repeated Marian. "That's what I said. He's just that, and he'll make you mind your p's and q's, I can tell you."

Larose tossed her head; she had known many men who might have been described as "gentlemen," but she had never thought of minding her p's and q's; it had never been required of her.

"You needn't flurry yourself," said Marian, noting her scorn. "He won't talk to you. He hasn't got half an eye for anyone but Rose de Winton when she is in the room, and she is bound to come down pretty soon now."

Hugh Templeton had met the de Wintons at Wiesbaden, whither Rosalie had gone in search of business and baths; and Rose, for reasons other than her obvious beauty, had evoked in the young man a certain curiosity. For Hugh Templeton

the drama of Woman was at the third act—he knew, so he said, all that there was to be known on the subject, and it did not interest him—much. Had he not an unreasonable dislike of that poet, he might have quoted Kipling, for the fact that “The Colonel’s lady and Judy O’Grady are sisters under the skin,” was one that he always insisted upon—insisted upon it, however, in chosen language that had charmed a duchess into forgetting the atrocious sentiment.

Now Rose de Winton was no exception to this rule; she also was made of the same dust as the duchess, and she accepted frankly all that Templeton told her without the habiliments of words—accepted and pondered it with the comprehensive and unused brain of a young girl. All this amused Templeton hugely; he propounded problems for her edification over *crème de menthe frappée*, a drink that she especially affected—and watched her face them squarely. That she did face them was a never-ending delight to him. Her point of view was so extraordinary, and yet her position when she had gained it, through crooked and devious byways, was always a tenable one. She had a queer, undeveloped germ of a soul somewhere that made for justice, and it was this abortive thing that had caught Hugh Templeton’s fancy. How on earth did she get it!—she, a little savage, but a nice little savage if ever there was one—what did she want with a soul, the heritage of the respectable classes? That every man and woman is born into the world, a soul owning a body, is, as Hugh Templeton knew well—a fiction. Rosalie, poor dear thing, had no soul to speak of, or if she had ever had? it had been washed away long ago in kisses and champagne. But Rose—with Rose anything was possible.

At this moment, while her wraith haunted Hugh Templeton, the real Rose stood before her looking-glass surveying herself critically. The picture was a brilliant one. The light behind her head shone through her hair—more red than gold—giving her the aureole of a saint. But for the rest her beauty was quite frankly *beauté du diable*—no saintliness here!—but life—the pride and glory of life—vibrating, pulsing, radiating into

the flashing eyes, and the red, full, delicate, sensitive lips—life, touching face, neck, wrist, and elbow with delicious dimples, moulding the swell of each small, rounded breast, swaying the hips, curving the arch of the instep, making her what she was—her mother's child, a perfect piece of human workmanship, Rose de Winton. Who could say that here the hand of the potter trembled or that this pot was marred?

She wore a dancing dress of rose-colored gauze which reached to her ankle. It was edged with rose petals, and in the swirl of billowing skirts an under petticoat of roses, shading from white to the deepest blush pink, revealed itself. Her ankles twinkled from between roses. Her arms and neck were bare, and bare of ornament, though clusters of vivid velvet roses nestled in her copper hair, challenging criticism. The two colors clashed into harmony; the whole dazzled. She stood looking at herself, at first pensively, and then with a smile upon her lips. She saw there reflected a beauty that stimulated her like wine. She loved herself. She loved what she saw there reflected. She would have liked to have kissed it and held it close. Then she grew critical. Surely her lips were not yet red enough? She picked up a stick of carmine and deepened their tint, guarding carefully the outline. It was enough. She was perfect. She made her way downstairs.

When she opened the door there was a little murmur of applause. The leading lady had at last appeared. Rosalie turned round, glanced at her daughter with a nod of approval, and then went on chatting. The women clustered round Rose with kisses and twitters, and the men tendered their homage each in his own way.

Only Hugh Templeton said nothing, yet Rose, as her eyes drooped before him, felt that he had said the most of all.

In a few minutes she was free to come to him.

"What have you done with yourself to-day?" he asked, after a silence.

"I have been to a sale," returned Rose. "I've bought a Paris model gown—lovely—a little soiled, you know, but—half the price! I had to beat them down, though! I beat them down two pounds ten—wasn't that good?"

"You did not buy the dress that you are wearing at a sale!" returned Templeton in a low voice.

"No. Do you like it? I had this made for me. I told the dressmaker exactly what to do. It's sweet underneath—all roses—you'll see when I dance. It's different to anything else."

"Exactly. It is different to anything else. It expresses you—it is all Rose. To buy a dress at a sale is to buy another woman's garment. It says nothing—or worse, it says something that is not true—something commonplace or vulgar."

"Oh, no," Rose pouted.

"Well, then, if it isn't commonplace or vulgar, it is only the last idiotic word of the last idiotic fashion. You must never buy anything at a sale again, Rose."

For a moment the girl was indignant, then smiles broke over her face.

"How funny you are!" she exclaimed. "You are so serious. Still, I think that what you say is true. There are one or two things that I wouldn't have had in the gown if I had designed it. I—well, I won't wear it! There!"

Laughter added to her dimples and shone merrily in her eyes. When she laughed, Templeton noted, it was not merely an affair of certain muscles and certain sounds, but that she became for the moment the incarnation of laughter. Also, and this appealed to him, too, although in another way, she talked, looking straight into his eyes, and she never looked away. That was one of the most adorable things about her. Self-possessed young ladies of his own set invariably talked to the bridge of his nose or to his scarf pin, while girls of Rose's class—but what had Rose to do with class? The comparison stopped abruptly. No, Rose was comparable to nothing, and there was a jolly *camaraderie* about her. She was a good fellow.

"Well!" He had wandered away but she still laughed to him. "Didn't you hear me say that I am going to give up that gown because you will not think it pretty? Are you pleased? You must be. Say you are pleased, at once, and say at the same time that you are a very funny person with very funny ideas."

"I am a very funny person," repeated Templeton, "and—and I have very funny ideas, but you, Rose, are a very wise person and have very wise ideas. Therefore I am pleased. Don't you think that things being as they are, we might be—friends?"

"But we are friends," answered Rose. "At least—aren't we?"

"No, we are acquaintances. I met you six weeks ago at Wiesbaden, and since then I have seen you about once a week."

"You saw me yesterday," answered Rose; "and the day before."

"Yesterday and the day before do not count, for it was the day before yesterday that I conceived the notion that we might be friends. Does the idea commend itself to you, O Queen of Roses?"

The girl held her hands pressed tightly together. Her eyes drooped, her mouth was inscrutable. Then she shook her head.

"I don't—know."

He was both surprised and amused. What had she got in her mind now?

"You won't be friends with me?"

"Oh, yes. I'll be friends, but what I call friendship you call—acquaintanceship, wasn't it?"

"And what I call friendship, you call——?"

There was silence.

He repeated his last word, "You call——"

"Love," said Rose, daringly flashing a vivid glance at him.

He was staggered. She was making the running now with a vengeance. He had not meant love. He had meant just what he had said. At least—had he? He had not known quite what he had meant. The word had hit him. Perhaps he had meant more than he thought, after all. He became a prey to an aggravated form of indecision.

But Mrs. de Winton staved off further complications by calling to Rose for her dance.

Rose stood up; she passed her hands across her eyes; she felt a little dazed. For six weeks—since she had first met

Templeton—she had contemplated this moment. But how odd he was! How different to other men who had made love to her. Friendship! Who had ever asked her before for friendship? The word she had waited for had come, but it was she herself who had spoken it. Still he had looked—yes, yes, he had looked!

But what had happened to her? She also was different. There was no gayety in this thing—no laughter. Only an intolerable unrest—a desire that was a pain. She must get away from it, and here in her dance was her immediate solace. The music called to her; she took her stand in the middle of the room, conscious of nothing but her inward turmoil and the music. It seemed to come from far off. She ached to it.

Ah, now her feet are moving with it—tripping to the notes. There is relief in this. She must be careful now to form her steps neatly. Soon they will be forgotten. She will whirl then, and thrill, caught up and borne aloft on a strong gale of sound. She realizes nothing now but the dance. She feels the need of expression, and she takes comfort in the limitations of her art. It gives form to the passion that thrills her.

Now the music has ceased tripping—it is scudding, hurrying, rushing—on and on. A pause—it delays, languishes, laughs, and returns to the old *motif*. Now once more precipitant, it is ominous—full of portents, inclined to hurry; then, back again. Will it never attain to its desire? Yes, it is coming: there is a muttering, a disquiet, a perturbation. Rose catches her breath; the time has come; the climax is nearly reached. She rocks to and fro. The music wails, it is full of pain; no, there is something greater here than pain, it is passion. On, on—faster, faster! She does not know now what it is that she wishes to express. It is something beyond her—something from another world. It is the end of everything, the meaning of this whirl of motion. It is ecstasy, transport, rapture! She is still now, silent, motionless. Like a star she hangs, quivering—then she sinks back, down, and down, and down. It is the *grand écart*.

Smiling, she opens her eyes; there are tears in them. She

is very pale; she has danced beyond herself. For the moment she had been no longer a mere creature, but one with the forces that urge humanity. That is the goal of passion.

Now she is a girl again, flushed and laughing, accepting the congratulations of her friends. Hugh Templeton alone sat silent.

"Have *you* nothing to say to me?"

Mrs. de Winton had announced supper and the guests crowded into the inner room; they were alone.

"Yes."

"When you do dance, I wish you
A wave o' the sea, that you might ever do
Nothing but that; move still, still so
And own no other function."

Rose looked at him with puzzled eyes; her lips were parted.

"Those are words out of a book."

He laughed. "My dear, how *did* you know?"

"By the way you said them. Where do they come from? Are they in the Bible?"

"No." He laughed again. Surely she was delicious. "A man called Shakespeare wrote them."

"Yes." Rose nodded. "I have heard of him. I have seen Hamlet, and I didn't care for it. But you said the lines so gravely I made sure that they meant something."

"So they do. They mean a great deal. They mean as much as the performance that I have just witnessed. Rose——" he paused.

"Yes." She had noticed the inflection of the last word; her voice thrilled.

"May I—may I come to see you to-morrow at four o'clock? I—I have something to say."

"Ah." The warm blood flooded into her cheeks—and lips. She lifted rejoicing eyes. But to-morrow—it fled back in dismay—why to-morrow! "To-morrow is a long time!" she pouted. "Say it to-night. There is nobody here."

A smile curled his lips. She was very human, and very young. He liked her the better for her youth.

"No," he replied. "If I say it to-night, it will not be the thing that I mean to say to-morrow."

A quick trouble clouded Rose's blue eyes.

"Why?" she said simply. "How *can* it be a different thing?"

"That—I cannot explain. Come in to supper. Aren't you hungry?"

"Hungry. The trouble lifted. "Why, I'm simply ravenous. I could eat a whole lobster."

He pulled her hand through his arm, and together, laughing, they ran in to supper.

Chapter Three

He looked at her as a lover can;
She looked at him as one who awakes:
The past was asleep, and her life began.

BROWNING

TEMPLETON left the de Wintons' early, but before making his adieux to Rosalie he crossed the room to where Rose stood talking to Marian Williams. He bent to her.

"Go to bed," he said in a whisper. "You ought not to be up so long after midnight."

Rose looked at him quickly; then she turned to her companion. "Good-night," she said simply. "It is very late; I am going to bed."

She rejoiced in her new-found obedience. She waited until he had bent over her mother's hand, and then she followed him softly into the hall. "Good-night," she said.

He shouldered his coat and, hat in hand, stood looking at her without speaking: a smile gleamed under his lowered lids.

"Good-night," she said again, a trifle wistfully. She waited.

Then he laughed outright. "My dear," he exclaimed, "you do indeed want somebody to look after you." He lifted her chin with one finger and kissed her lightly on the lips. "Good-night; go and get your beauty sleep, good-by until to-morrow."

"At four?" said Rose anxiously.

"At four," he repeated smiling. The door shut and he was gone.

For a moment Rose stood motionless in the hall; then she picked up her skirts and ran nimbly upstairs. Her bedroom was on the first floor, and the French window looked out on to a small balcony and the street. Hastily pushing it open she stepped out and leaned her arms against the stone rail. Yes, she had been in time; there he was, below her, to the left,

walking away into the night. "Good-night," she said under her breath, leaning towards the departing figure. "Ah, good-night, good-night—until to-morrow."

The moonlight bathed the street in silver; a policeman marched upon his solemn beat; a drunken woman lurched along the pavement, swaying from side to side; a cat passed swiftly across the road from shadow to shadow. At the end of the long street Templeton had turned the corner. He was gone: how quiet it was! Yet the sky was full of light. The more crowded parts of London still threw an upward glare. From the room below came the sound of laughter. Rose listened. She could hear a table being wheeled into the drawing-room; Rosalie and her guests were going to play cards. How often as a little girl had she stood like this looking out into the night, while from below her there came the sound of merrymaking. Her thoughts flew back to her childhood. Of late years she also had made one of the revelers; she also had laughed and danced into the early morning, sleeping—sometimes, but half undressed, until the afternoon of the next day. Sometimes when this happened she would wake in a silent house and find that Rosalie had gone down to the country for a time, leaving her alone. A note displayed upon the dining-room table would explain; it would run more or less to the effect that Rose must continue to order meat from the usual butcher (or bread from the usual baker, as the case might be), because the bills owing were such that any cessation in the amount of food supplied would bring about an instant demand for payment.

How it all came back to her to-night! The unutterable loneliness of it appalled her.

When her mother left her in this manner, she usually spent her morning in bed reading novels; then she dressed herself and attended to her hands and complexion—that always took a long time—strolling out afterwards to look at the shops and take a solitary tea in Bond Street. Unless someone offered to take her out to dinner, when she would be sure of having a good time—nobody was merrier than Rose on such occasions—the long evening passed drearily. She played the piano or

leaned out on the balcony pondering her loneliness, wondering how other girls of her age spent their days, picturing herself in society—driving in the Park, or at Court, sparkling in diamonds. This loneliness was not, however, a permanent condition; she had had two serious love affairs, one of which had lasted for nearly a year; and her visits abroad had always been a great pleasure to her. She had youth and health, and these two things, irrespective of circumstances, spell a certain happiness. Once she had been at Brussels without her mother, but after the first delight of being free to give herself airs, order expensive dinners and travel as a person of importance, she had not enjoyed herself. She was young; she had wanted to spend all her time in theaters and cafés, and she had not liked being left alone in the hotel while her companion—her senior by many years—left her to attend to the business that had in the first place determined the place of their sojourn. The affair ended in a quarrel.

"You ought to have taken mamma," said Rose, weeping; "you get on with her much better than you do with me!" Certainly had Rosalie been the lady entertained instead of Rose, the little trip would have been in every way more satisfactory.

But to-night! Her isolation and these fitful pleasures came back to her as a far off dream. It seemed as though she stood upon the brink of a new life, when she would be no longer alone and where happiness would take the place of pleasure. She trembled at the thought; she dared not picture it. To look so great a joy full in the face while yet it was newly dawning was to tempt fate. "Go and get your beauty sleep," Templeton had said. Ah, yes, she must get her beauty sleep! Now she must be beautiful no longer for herself, but for him—always for him. She would go to bed at once; even in small things she would obey him. With a smile on her face she turned back into the room and began to put it in order. She felt that she would like to sleep in a tidy room for this once. Now that she was a new creature she looked at the chaos around her with new eyes. The room was exactly as she had left it when she ran downstairs some four or five hours ago, for the day-

girl whom the de Wintons had in to do their housework left at eight o'clock, and although the cook occasionally assisted, the bedrooms didn't come within her province. Brushes, combs, powder, hair nets, lace, brooches, scent bottles, and rouge, lay upon the dressing-table in a heap; dresses lay upon the floor; boots and underclothes had been thrown carelessly upon the blue satin coverlet of the bed; the crystal basin was full of dirty water that had been left there since the morning. Rose worked at it energetically for some minutes, then she curled herself up on the bed and gave way to the dream that haunted her. It made her heart beat fast; it claimed her wholly; she could pay attention to nothing. Her room didn't matter; after all she didn't mind untidiness, she was accustomed to it; she wanted to be quiet and to think; imagination called her. Impetuously she tore off her dancing dress and threw it into a heap in the corner; she pushed off her clothes and left them on the floor beside her bed. Then she pulled on her lace nightgown and crept in between the sheets. It was a hot night; she tossed from side to side and finally lay across the bed, pressing her eyelids with her hands. She lay quietly, too excited, too full of happiness to sleep; she buried her flushed face in her pillow; her pulses trembled. "Ah, I love him," she murmured, "I love him, I love him, and I can't bear it."

On leaving the de Wintons', Templeton had lighted a cigarette and had strolled quietly back to Claridge's. He had come to interview a publisher about two works that he desired to bring out in the following spring—"The Political Situation in Russia," and the "Genius of Rodin." The latter was to be illustrated with his own pastels, and bound sumptuously. He had now completed his arrangements and was entirely satisfied with his visit.

He had intended spending a short time with some friends in Paris before returning to Biarritz. There was nothing to keep him in London—nothing but Rose de Winton—but to-night's vision of that young lady had successfully shattered his plans. Not that he minded; he was sick of his friends; he had seen too many people of late—he was sick of the sight and sound of his own species. He would be quite content to bury himself

for a while in some little English village with honeysuckle and thrushes, and read and dream, and store up material for another volume of love-sonnets like the one he had dedicated to the Comtesse de la Cherois' only the other day. Hitherto women of his own set, women of the real world, had occupied him exclusively; he had always found them charming and—kind. But Rose—Rose was hardly of his species at all. Rose was a primitive being, a beautiful savage, a sort of delicious little Pocahontas. A few weeks ago he would have gibed at the notion of such an affair. He would have disliked the turn of her phrases; his ears would have been quick to catch a mispronunciation; it would, in short, have been the last thing to attract him. However, life is full of surprises, and Rose herself was the greatest. There were possibilities in Rose. At the first onslaught of passion he had stood on guard. If he were going to consider foolishness, he would do so in spite of her wiles, with that deliberation that would make it wisdom.

It was his rule to lay so many painful limitations upon his vices that in the matter of self-restraint they played for him the same part as virtues. But that is the art of life—*il faut reculer pour mieux sauter*. He had watched Rose critically all the evening; he had followed every turn of the dance from the start to the final swooning finish, and although his senses were awake, his head was cool. One thing he realized now for certain—there were possibilities in Rose. The point that was not so certain was whether it was worth while or not to discover those possibilities. Rose was a child, but a child capable of finding her womanhood in a great passion. He laughed at the mere thought and yet it was true. That such a flower could be found in the forcing ground of Rosalie de Winton's home seemed impossible—*un amour entre les amourettes*—and yet it was true. He would bet his life that it was true, but no one except a transcendentalist would have had the eyes for it. Templeton laughed at himself. A transcendentalist! Was he cozened by the baser passions? Was the cloven hoof printed on the new robe that he contemplated wearing? He thought not. But, heavens—for this experiment he would have to become father and schoolmaster as well as lover! Lover!—others had given

his little love a liberal education here. No, on second thought they had not; she knew nothing at all about it; he was sure of it, her eyes said it, the quick flush on her cheek said it, the eager delight with which she listened to him proclaimed the same thing. Her soul was virgin still; it was her soul he wanted—poor Psyche, hunted so hardly by the hounds of Venus.

As to the rest of her! Well, the rest of her was just Rose, and adorable; he would hardly have been so interested if it were not so, but it was the spiritual rather than the material that had caught him, that was certain. He would love her, of course—a man can always love a pretty woman—but the main thing about this affair would be that she would love him. A woman capable of a great passion was not to be had every day for the asking, and the excitement of creating a great passion is the strongest excitement that the mind of man or woman can conceive, for it is to rival God, to hold the precious life trembling in a human hand. By the side of it, to Templeton, other affairs, however difficult, were dull, dull as respectability itself. Rosalie de Winton was by her birthright a member of that deathless profession which a wise man has sapiently observed is "the oldest in the world," and was as like, or as unlike, the other members of her sisterhood as one pea in a pod is like or unlike the rest of the row. But Rose was different; Rose was a woman with possibilities.

He turned into the hotel and ordered a whisky and soda before going to bed. "To Rose!" He lifted his glass to his lips: her image rose before him—no, no, he denied himself—nothing was decided as yet, and he wished to sleep easily. He must put that thought away until to-morrow. He lit a cigarette, and inspected some of his own drawings that were lying on the table. Then he went to bed and tried to sleep. But sleep stood aloof. In desperation he attacked the practical side of the arrangement; he hunted in the recesses of memory for the ideal village and rose-clad cottage, and so successful was he that by the time he had touched oblivion a complete scheme was packed away somewhere—quite near the threshold of consciousness, so near indeed that in the early part of the

night it slipped into a dream, but waited, afterwards, entire and most reasonable to be presented at four o'clock on the following day to the lady who took so large a share in it.

In the house in Princes Street the morning sun shone upon a scene of desolate profusion. The supper still stood upon the table; champagne still remained in the glasses; the floor was powdered with tobacco ash. In the morning light the silken furniture of the drawing-room, seen through the folding doors that stood open, stared gaudily; dust and the scent of many cigars hung in the draperies; the lilies had shed their pollen upon the carpet, the white petals drooped dying.

At ten o'clock Rosalie slept quietly on undisturbed; her bodily comfort was supreme; she was conscious of a quiet mind. But Rose was in a different case. When that hour had struck she felt that she could bear her bedroom no longer. She slipped on a rose-colored dressing gown and ran down, stairs to ask the cook to bring her some breakfast; she didn't trouble about slippers, the thick soft pile of the Wilton stair-carpet was comfortable to her feet.

When she reached the top of the kitchen stairs she heard voices: the cook was evidently quarreling with the day-girl who had just come. For a moment Rose listened; then she crept down quietly.

✓The atmosphere of the kitchen was indescribable, for the cook, like most of her class, disliked fresh air. A half-eaten dish of veal in aspic that had served them for breakfast stood, with some tea in a Dresden teapot, upon the dresser; near was a teacup of the same pattern, half full of rum. On hearing footsteps the cook instinctively put her hand to the dirty bodice that gaped at the bosom, but she could not close it for the buttons were missing. She turned her heavy eyes defiantly upon the girl, then she noted the lace of Rose's nightgown, that was open at the neck, and the delicacy of the silk that trailed upon the dirty floor. She laughed insolently, then she spoke.

"Have you come to give me instructions to-day, miss, instead of yer dear ma?" she said, fawning.

Rose ordered her breakfast and turned to go; at the door

she stopped. "It's very close in here; could you not open the window? There's a shocking smell."

For a moment the woman looked at her fiercely, then with a forethought of which Rosalie would have been incapable she swallowed her retort, and after banging some china that she held in her hand violently upon the table, she walked away into the scullery. Here was the source of the smell. Dirty cloths, scrubbing brushes, decaying vegetables, polluted an atmosphere whose freshness was already killed by a jet of gas that had been left flaring the whole night through.

Rose turned to go, and the woman, watching her from the scullery door, could not resist a parting gibe:

"Pretty little dress, that," she said. "Nice for the park."

Rose pretended not to hear: she picked up the tail of her dressing-gown and ran upstairs; she was accustomed to insolence, for, although Rosalie paid good wages, servants were hard to find. A competent, respectable woman never stayed longer than a month, and more than once a servant had packed her boxes and left the house after one night's sojourn with the de Wintons. When this occurred Rose and Rosalie had fled to Brighton or else had taken their meals in restaurants. The irregularity of such a life didn't disturb Rose; it was to her the usual thing. When a servant did remain with them she was usually a woman of disreputable character, who lived out, and who, as often as not, drank and thieved. Such a person upon leaving invariably laid hands on anything valuable she could find. However, careless over food and drink, and indeed over a great many other things, and knowing no form of economy, Rosalie still kept money and jewelry carefully locked up. Also she made it a rule to inspect the boxes of the outgoing domestic, or even the small handbag, should she be one who didn't sleep in the house. This she did, usually, in the midst of a storm of vituperation, with a certain calm enjoyment. Such scenes had become impressed upon Rose's consciousness; she had witnessed so many that she had their lesson by heart. She knew that everybody in this world got as much as they could from everybody else, by fair means or foul; that a woman's weapon against a woman was her tongue,

and against a man her guile. She knew also that a woman could conquer other women through men, but that she could conquer men in one way only—through her sex. Therefore to Rose de Winton the fact of sex was all important—it was the whole of life.

She now turned back into bed with a book, and waited for her breakfast. At last it came—the costly china shoved upon a dirty tray. The servant—euphemistically termed a day-girl—although she was over thirty and had a child to provide for—was crying. Her face was blotched and moist with tears.

“What’s the matter?” said Rose as she cleared a place upon the bed for her tray. “What are you crying for?”

“I’m a-going,” said the day-girl. “I’ve had enough of that Mrs. Johns. I’m as good as ’er, and a deal better. I can’t stick ’er. I’m a-going.”

Rose drank some tea: she felt sorry for the day-girl because she looked so miserable. “What has Mrs. Johns done?” she inquired.

“Chucked the stock-pot at me!” The day-girl broke into fresh sobs at the remembrance. “My ears is still chock full of the grease; the top o’ my ’ed’s like a taller candle. No, I’m going—a nigger-driving place I calls this—a little ’ell, an’ no mistake. I’m off.” Seeing that Rose didn’t stop her she gained confidence. “I’ve bin in rispecktible plices, I ’ave. I’m a rispecktible woman now, although you mightn’t think it, what with the child an’ all alone.”

“Are you?” said Rose. “It doesn’t interest me—you’d better go now and make it up with Mrs. Johns. Go and say you are sorry.”

“The hidear!” exclaimed the day-girl indignantly. “I’m ain’t sorry.”

“That doesn’t matter,” returned Rose. “Say you are; it’s best in the end. If you leave here, you only have to work under someone worse than Mrs. Johns.”

But the day-girl would be jiggled and blown, and finally would see herself dead and damned before she would say she was sorry. So voluble did she become that Rose had the great-

est difficulty in making her leave the bedroom. She was only persuaded to do so by being told that if she intended going, she had better inform Mrs. Johns at once of the fact, and then get her week's money from Mrs. de Winton.

At last she was disposed of. Rose ate her breakfast slowly, and then lay back luxuriously among her pillows—thinking. She could hear the voices of her mother and the day-girl in angry altercation just below her; they broke into the fair dream that she had picked up from the night before.

Evidently Rosalie was as much annoyed at having been disturbed as at having to pay the day-girl her week's wages. but as far as that was concerned she always looked upon the payment of any debt as a personal injury inflicted upon her by the debtor. Every moment the storm waxed more furious; it did not affect Rose; she did not hear it; she was plunged in her day dream. She pulled a tiny enameled watch from under her pillow, so small was it she was obliged to wrap it in a handkerchief—eleven o'clock! Five hours! Well, she would have to dress and get in a meal and arrange some flowers before Templeton came—it was not too long. She pushed away her tray and jumped up; then she pinned up her ruddy hair with a tortoise shell comb, and once more slipped on her rose-colored dressing-gown. She gathered up an armful of towels and sponges and made her way to the bathroom.

Rosalie's bathroom was tiled with white tiles; the bath was let into the floor, reached by a couple of steps down; there were many complex taps and inventions of all sorts. Soaps, essences, and skin foods stood on some shelves near the shower-bath. The whole room testified to the fact that in Rosalie's creed cleanliness came next to luxury.

On her way down Rose had passed her mother, who stood upon the landing in her nightdress easing her mind of some irritability in her remarks to the two servants below.

The day-girl was about to depart; she had, after much discussion, obtained her week's money from Rosalie, but now Mrs. Johns rose up from the basement with a noisy accusation. Her story was that the day-girl had stolen two lamb cutlets. Mrs. Johns had taken them from the butcher for Rosalie's

lunch, and after she had done her washing up in the scullery the lamb cutlets had disappeared. Previously they had lain upon the kitchen table. They were raw, the day-girl could not have eaten them; Mrs. Johns was sure that they were in her clothes somewhere.

"Look in her pockets," said Rosalie.

The day-girl promptly turned her pocket inside out; it was empty. She carried nothing but a pair of thick woolen gloves and an umbrella.

"Open the umbrella," said Rosalie.

It was done, shaken, and given back to the day-girl.

"Hm!" said Rosalie. She bit the nail of her first finger.

"Those cutlets are on her; she will have to undress—that is, unless you can pinch her and find their whereabouts."

Mrs. Johns tossed her head. "I wouldn't feel over that slut, not for twenty lamb chops, mum; and when I'd found 'em I wouldn't cook 'em. You must do that there kind of dirty work yourself."

"Don't be impertinent, Johns," said Rosalie; then, "Oh, stop, stop—I have it!" Unmindful of her costume—a film of lace and cambric—she strode downstairs.

"You just give me those woolen gloves."

"Shan't," said the day-girl, and prepared to fight and fly—but Mrs. Johns had pinned her from behind. Mrs. Johns was a powerful woman.

"The gloves!" demanded Rosalie.

After some struggling the day-girl gave in; the gloves fell to the ground with a thud. Rosalie pounced upon them.

"Ah!"

Mrs. de Winton's fair face shone with pleasure; one of the abundant curls escaped from its fastening and lay upon her white shoulder; she was a beautiful and triumphant woman. From each of the day-girl's woolen gloves she had drawn forth a clammy and microscopic lamb cutlet.

"You can't do me," said Rosalie.

Then the day-girl lost hope. She sank upon the floor, given over to hysterical weeping. There was no denying the lamb cutlets.

"It was for the child," she pleaded; "he's awful white and thin, and he's had no meat for a week!"

"You've taken more than they two chops every day for more than a week," muttered the cook; "and I was that good to you I let yer until yer cheeked me."

Rosalie turned the key in the lock of the hall door, then locked the door that shut off the kitchen stairs. She stood, forgetful of her costume—a very Venus—with the two keys in one hand and the two lamb cutlets in the other.

"I am going to give you in charge," she remarked pleasantly to the day-girl.

The woman shrieked and, covering her face in her coarse hands, rocked to and fro.

"I shall see to it myself," continued Rosalie, "as soon as I am dressed." With a smile to Mrs. Johns, she trotted back to her bedroom on her bare white feet.

Although her words were stifled by tears, the supplications of the day-girl ascended to the first floor.

"Why should I let you off?" asked Rosalie, looking down at her over the banisters. "Tell me that?"

The day-girl could find no answer to such a question—she only replied by moans.

The cook came to Rosalie for the key of the staircase and disappeared with it into the basement.

The day-girl was left alone, sobbing her soul out upon the door mat. Soon she dragged herself up the thickly carpeted staircase and hammered at Rosalie's bedroom door. She received no reply until she blurted out a sentence that penetrated—it was the only sentence that would have, under any circumstances, touched Mrs. de Winton.

Rosalie opened the door a couple of inches and looked out.

"Here it is!" the day-girl suffocated: "three half crowns, seven shillings and sixpence—just as you give it to me." Her week's wages lay in her palm; she held them out to Rosalie, who had now donned a lace wrapper. "Take it beck, and let me go quiet."

From under her pillow Mrs. de Winton drew a gold-chain

purse studded with emeralds. She opened it and dropped in the money.

"There," she said graciously as she snapped the purse, "it isn't many people who would have let you off as easily as this. I am too soft-hearted, I can't bear to see tears—that's the truth."

She rang the bell while the day-girl stood upon the staircase wiping her eyes.

"You may let this woman go," said Rosalie when Mrs. Johns appeared. "She is sorry for her fault and I have forgiven her."

The day-girl crept silently downstairs. When she heard the kitchen door shut behind her she became more hysterical; she sat upon the area steps and sobbed. She didn't know where to go to, for she had no character; also there was only a shilling in her pocket, and she had the child to keep as well as herself. So upset was she and so little self-controlled that Mrs. Johns was obliged to call in a policeman after all to tell her to move on.

"Whatever should we do without the police?" said Mrs. Johns later.

"I'm sure I can't tell," answered Rosalie; "dear, brave fellows!"

Upstairs in her room, Rosalie, with an indefinable sensation of content, dressed slowly; she pondered in huge amusement the little episode that had just taken place. Every now and then she laid down her brush to laugh.

"Silly woman," she exclaimed at last, "to think that she could do me! Why, it would take the best wits of an archangel to do me!"

Rose found the morning none too long. She had to go in search of another day-girl, and not finding one she re-engaged the dirty charwoman who had been turned out of the house for drink the week before. However, this woman got the drawing-room clean somehow, and Rose opened the windows and arranged the flowers herself. At luncheon she nibbled at her food; the beating of her heart staved off hunger.

Ridiculous! Her mother looked at her with disapproval. Rose was in a state to make the worst of bargains.

"Look here, Rose," she said, after a moment's observation, "you are not fit to see this man to-day; you'll do something foolish if you don't look out! Have a brandy and soda—you want a pick-me-up! You can't have champagne; there's not a drop in the house. No, no; mercy! I never thought of it!" she laughed. "You can't have a brandy after all! He'll smell it if you do. He's the sort of man to be quite put off by the smell of brandy in a girl. Here, take the soda, have some vermouth in it, and a bit of ice; that'll make you hungry."

"No." Her manner changed. She leaned towards her daughter, speaking seriously; the undertone in her voice pleaded. "Don't go and spoil this bag of tricks through foolery, Rose. Heavens! at your age, or at any other age, I'd have had more self-respect than to look like that about any man; but then, I always was a proud woman. I never put myself out for one of them, although they were all clean crazy over me. I swear I never felt a thing—that's a woman's pride."

Rose leaned back wearily upon her chair; she had heard all this so many times before.

"I've got no pride," she said at last. "If, if——"

"What?"

"If he doesn't want me, I shall kill myself—there! I'm sick and worn out even with the thinking of it."

Mrs. de Winton was picking out a lobster claw. For a moment it absorbed her attention; she lifted it and with one eye peered into the cavity to see if she had done her duty by it. That point certain, she was free for Rose.

"You are love-sick," she said; "that's what's the matter with you. Love-sickness is just as much an illness as croup—only it comes at a different age. Well, well, never mind, don't fret; perhaps he'll like you all the better for it. One never knows; he's seen a lot of the world—more than his uncle, bless him—that's in your favor. A boy likes experience in a woman, a man—especially if he's traveled with her—about the



world—can't abide it: it puts him off. Well, you don't look on the make; you look pea-green." Again Rosalie laughed.

Rose rested her fair head against her hands. Her mother's voice hurt her nerves, but then she was defenseless to-day.

"Look here, my dear," Rosalie continued, "don't you let yourself in for anything just now. Leave it all to me. Let him talk and talk, and if he wants you to go right off with him for a time, just say you can't. Your mother is dependent on you for society, see! And above all keep him away from you; keep him well at arm's length. I shall be here—sitting just where I am now—and——"

Rose moved quickly.

"Mother!" Her tone was a reproach. "Mother, you always go out in the afternoon."

"I'm not going out this afternoon, anyway," returned Rosalie calmly. "You are as stupid as a sucking pig, Rose; there's no restraint or forethought about you—in fact, there is no modesty, that's what it is!—there is no modesty. You are just wild for the man, and if you were a modest woman you would not let him guess it. That's modesty. I don't want to spoil your chances, naturally, but there's as much chance of spoiling them one way as another. I don't want to leave your hash raw and good for nothing, but on the other hand I don't want to overcook it, see? Now I consider that one hour is ample time for you to fix up everything. At the end of one hour I shall just listen at the folding doors, and if I don't hear you talking, I shall just look you up—see? Don't you sit silent. Silences are bad things until there is some sort of a settlement. Besides, a silence would just do for a girl like you. Now with me, it's different. I could double my advantage in a silence, but you are not up to it. Don't you try for too much, my dear, or you'll lose everything."

Rosalie's voice stopped. The sound of it had become for Rose an infliction like the thud of the engine in a long journey. Now it had stopped. She pushed back her chair and stood up; then she lifted her tumbler of vermouth and soda and drank a deep draught. She was white, but her lips were red, and her eyes shone; she was chilly, but her hands burned. She

knew that there was no use in contending with her mother; Rosalie would swamp her opposition in a flood of words. Pride, modesty—she knew that these were Rosalie's synonyms for the business faculty in women: she was curiously deficient in her mother's virtues. She smiled a sort of acquiescence, and then, having obtained from Rosalie a grudging permission, got up and went out of the room. She walked upstairs unsteadily. Ah, how terribly her heart was beating! Would the time never go. This suspense was torture. She stood by the dressing-table and looked at herself in the glass; not a hair was out of place, but she looked strained and white—almost ugly. She moved out on to the balcony; a breeze lifted the little curls upon her forehead, but it didn't cool her, it only made her shiver. She sank on a chair beside the open window and looked out; she sat still, she tried to think, but no thoughts came. She could only remember the touch of Templeton's hand, the smile in his eyes, and these things had become a torment. Then she tried not to think. She shut her eyes, and she saw nothing but her lover's face. She got up; she could not bear to sit. She walked about. But she could not bear to walk, it increased her restlessness. She picked up a book, but although her eyes read page after page and her lips—according to her habit—formed the printed words, no picture reached her mind.

“When you do dance, I wish you
A wave o' the sea, that you might ever do
Nothing but that; move still, still so
And own no other function.”

That was what he had said—“a wave o' the sea!” Ah, the great cool, changeless sea! She fancied herself floating upon the open sea, under the open sky, cleansed through and through—carried by its sympathetic waters, free from this ache, this misery, this enchantment, this unrest, that somehow from somewhere had descended on her—free!

As she stared with unseeing eyes upon the crowd of vehicles and foot-passengers, a figure gradually forced itself upon her true vision. Templeton, with his usual easy deliberation moved across the road. Rose drew a shuddering breath,

for the sight of him had struck her as with a blow. It was four o'clock.

She flew downstairs to be in readiness for him, and, scarcely knowing what she did, seated herself in the little drawing room. There was no sound. Nothing stirred in the hall. Could it really have been he whom she had seen, or had her eyes deceived her? The man had passed on. No, no, there was the ring—the knock—for which she waited!

She was conscious of a short parley in the hall, and then the charwoman opened the drawing-room door a few inches and poked in her head—there was a gentleman! Yes, yes, Rose nodded but could not speak. "Please to walk this way," said the charwoman.

Rose remained motionless. She wondered if she would faint. If this was life, then life was agony. She did not dare stand up. She was trembling. She lifted a hand and received him sitting, like a queen.

Templeton came forward easily and took the hand, looking into her eyes. This new attitude amused him; he was in a mood to be amused. He had slept well, breakfasted well, and had just come from a luncheon party that had sat silent while he had talked brilliantly through five courses. At the end when, with a sigh that became general, chairs were pushed back, his hostess tapped him with a fan—"Ah, Chrysostom, Chrysostom of the golden mouth!"

He bent nearer. Something in the girl's appearance struck him. She was drawn and pale, the rose-pink beauty of yesterday had flown. She looked as though her body were consumed by some unearthly fire; passion burnt in her eyes, trembled on her lips, and fluttered in her white hands.

"There will be the devil to pay with this young woman!" thought Templeton.

But he did not desist. Without a word he stooped slowly, slowly, trying for the naked soul in those deep eyes.

It seemed to Rose that her life ebbcd. Templeton kissed her.

"What is the time?"

"One thousand years and twenty-five minutes past four."

"Then you must go."

"Go! Cruel! You've never got the heart to send me away—now. How can you, Rose?"

"I can't, and you know I can't. But there's mamma. Do go. I don't want you to meet mamma. Mamma said——"

"Well!"

"I won't tell you what she said; but I want you to go—now."

"And—to-morrow?"

"I will meet you anywheres you like to-morrow, only—don't come here!"

He shook his head.

"I won't be met, thank you. You shall stay at home until I can take you away forever! You understand?"

"Forever?"

"Well, almost—forever. Will that do?"

"That will do."

"Do you mind leaving your mother like this?"

"Forever?"

"For—some time, anyhow!"

"I don't mind anything if you love me. I don't want you to see mamma again. I will tell you why some day. I want to put on my hat and run out and meet you just as I am if you will have me. I don't want to have any but the clothes that you buy me. I don't want to have anything in the world but the things that you give me."

He caught her to him. She was more than adorable. The possibilities in her were more possible than he could have imagined. Mrs. de Winton would have bitten her lips bloodless from passion could she have heard her daughter's words. Templeton knew this, and the knowledge was as salt to ambrosia.

"See," he produced a pocketbook, "to-day is Tuesday. On Friday—do you mind traveling on a Friday? Unlucky, eh? No! Well, on Friday go down just as you are by the 9.50 from Paddington to Penzance in Cornwall. I will meet you there and take you on for the rest of the way. You may throw

your hat out of the carriage window if you like, so that I may buy you a new one."

"Where are we going afterwards?"

"That doesn't matter, I will meet you at Penzance."

"But what shall I do if you are prevented from coming?"

"I shall not be prevented."

"You might be—you might lose your train."

"I shall be already at Penzance."

"But—if——"

"Little silly! Wait at the station. I shall not look for you anywhere else. I won't have you dashing off to hotels all alone. You belong to me now. Stay at the station until I come. I won't fail you. You are trusting me with more than this little journey, Rose."

"I am trusting you with—my life."

She was very simple. She stood in the middle of the room, with her hands falling at her sides.

He had pulled her hair out of place; it fell on each side of her cheeks. She was touched with a more subtle beauty than the beauty of last night. She might have stood for a picture of the Dawn.

"Then we are not going to stay at Penzance?"

"Wait and see. You are going to live in a cottage and do lessons."

"Lessons!"

"Yes, lessons—with me."

"Oh!" With a sudden movement she crept to him and put her arms about his neck like a little child. She nestled her cheek against his coat. She was sweet—sweet—sweet—and he could feel her heart beating as it had never beat before.

"Lessons! I shall love them. Do you mean history and sums?"

"No, not sums." His words came through her hair in a whisper. "Women needn't know anything at all about sums. They are born with the knowledge that two and two make four. Literature, poetry, philosophy——"

"What is philosophy?"

"The art of life."

"I'm so glad that I'm not to do sums," said Rose. "They are the only things that make me quite stupid. What else am I going to do?"

"You are going to grow up, my beautiful Rose. Are you glad?"

"I don't mind," said Rose. "You must go now. Will you kiss me again before you go?"

During the last part of this conversation Mrs. de Winton had stood on the other side of the folding doors holding her watch in her hand. Templeton and Rose had talked quietly; she had not heard a word. Such a step as that contemplated by Rose would have been to Rosalie mere suicide, and indeed her experience of the world well justified such an opinion. But Rose was blind. Before the glamour of love had fallen on her she would have seen with the eyes of Rosalie—her upbringing, her surroundings, would have rendered any other point of view impossible. But now everything had changed. Her whole nature was transmuted. In spite of all she had seen and heard and experienced, something in her had sprung to life, and the whole sordid past lay forgotten at her feet. She had become as a little child, and for her was the kingdom, not of earth, but of heaven.

Mrs. de Winton would have had little patience with such a rainbow kingdom. She didn't trouble about rainbows, but she always managed to find the pot of gold hidden in the black earth at the foot. Nobody who touches the gold can see the rainbow, and nobody who has once seen the rainbow, wants the gold. Mrs. de Winton would have said: "Don't talk such a lot of rubbish to me, for goodness' sake!"

Suddenly the hall door shut with a loud bang. Rosalie bounced out of the drawing room and found herself face to face with Rose.

"What's that?" she said.

Rose kept a steady front. She looked at her mother without flinching.

"He's gone."

"Templeton!"

"Yes."

Rosalie was speechless. Not finding a vent in words, rage swelled in the veins about her temples and rose in a flood of purple on her forehead. Then it spoke.

"You fool! you fool! What did I—oh, you fool!" She calmed herself. "Did he make love to you?" Without answering, Rose flung herself into an armchair.

"He did, he did! You look a different being—you look as though you had been sitting in the sun. What did he say?"

"Nothing—not a word." Rose laughed at her "nothing." She had spoken the truth. Certainly Templeton had never said, "I love you."

"And you—oh, you gawk—you donkey—why did you let him go? When is he coming again?"

Memories of childhood flooded in on Rose. She saw herself beaten to exhaustion, gasping for mercy to those angry eyes. She almost felt the pain of the blows that Rosalie had been wont to shower upon her. Still she stood her ground; she was prepared for anything that Rosalie might do, nothing would astonish her. She had been born to these scenes, bred to them, they made the atmosphere of her home.

"Mr. Templeton is not coming again. He is going away."

"Without you?"

"He will leave London alone."

"——! ——! ——!" said Rosalie. "Oh, you more than fool! You imbecile, you dolt, you blessed idiot! You let a man like that slip through your fingers because you are too much in love with him to hold him. Oh, you are soft—that's what you are! You're not all there! You're half baked! My God, to think of it! My God! My God! Why, I paid ten pounds for that dancing dress. I thought it would have taken you off my hands for good—I thought that it would have married you."

"Married!" exclaimed Rose in astonishment. "Married me! Oh, I don't want to be married. I don't think most men care much about their wives."

Mrs. de Winton looked at her daughter in silence. Her frenzy was complete. She held on to the back of a chair,

trembling with rage. Her teeth were locked. Rose knew that look of old, and from the force of habit she cowered.

"Don't hit me, mother!" she said in a low voice, lifting a hand as though to ward off a blow. "It always makes you ill afterwards. And—and—the last time you hit me, I hit back. I bruised your cheek. You remember. I could hurt you more than that if you hit me now. Look here, I—I—don't suppose that Mr. Templeton has gone forever—only for a time—he said so—and I do think that he is in love with me, although he didn't tell me he was. There are other ways of saying so, aren't there?"

Rosalie's rages seldom lasted, and at her daughter's words this one passed almost instantaneously into a storm of tears. Rose mixed *sal volatile* for her, and afterwards powdered her heated face and fanned her. Then they had tea together as though nothing had occurred to disturb their serenity. Rosalie ate a plateful of buttered scones, and when she went out at six o'clock to get her hair waved she was in the best of humors.

Chapter Four

"She has begun forgetting. When she wakes
The years that have gone over her from the hour
When she first dreamt of love shall flicker out
And that dream only shine before her feet."

W. B. YEATS

TIME," so says the dictionary, "is the measurement of duration, whether past, present, or future." But it is an arbitrary measurement—capricious and ungoverned by fixed rules. "Time travels in divers paces with divers persons!" A thousand years are, in reality, only yesterday; but in order to count them we must desert reality, follow the rules of a specious method, and consult the clock.

Now the clock in Rosalie de Winton's dressing-room had registered the passing of some sixty-odd hours from the moment of Templeton's unsatisfactory departure on Tuesday to the moment when the significance of that departure was made clear to her. A theft had been planned and executed. Rosalie had been robbed, not only of a daughter—she could have borne that—but of much bright gold that had colored anticipatory dreams. The letter that Rose left behind her had dispelled these dreams forever. And it did more, it begat in Rosalie a new set of emotions—maternal emotions, turbulent and tragical. Rachel weeping for her children was a poor thing compared to Mrs. de Winton. Her sobs ascended as high as the heavens and sank as low as the scullery. Mrs. Johns crept up the basement stairs to listen to them, but that was no difficult matter, for Rosalie, greedy for sympathy, had left her door open so that she might the more easily be heard. Mrs. Johns itched with curiosity. Soon she mounted the stairs and, receiving a broken word of encouragement, administered comfort, backed up by a stimulant.

Then the fortified Rosalie reread her letter. There was nothing to be done, for Rose said as little of her whereabouts

as of her companion. Mrs. de Winton hazarded a guess—the conjecture calmed her; she assumed the philosophic mood. Perhaps after all she had been unnecessarily agitated! She did not pretend to understand her daughter. It was just possible that all along Rose might have been playing a deeper game than her mother knew of—just possible! Mrs. de Winton took comfort and hoped for the best. The darkest clouds have sometimes a silver—nay, a golden lining! That, from her experience of mankind, she knew well. Those sixty-odd hours ticked off by Rosalie's clock stood in the chronology of mankind for two days and three nights—and for how much more? For some souls the future had, during that time, become the present, and the reckoning was just beginning; while others had slipped beyond the need of it into the everlasting yesterday. For Rose de Winton the time had been as the interim between two lives, during which she waited patiently and counted her breaths.

She went about her business as one in a dream, and yet she was entirely methodical. She packed her boxes and sent them to the station during the absence of Rosalie; from which fact it will be seen that her remark to Templeton about coming to him with empty hands had been of a symbolic nature. And yet when the time arrived and the last hour had fallen, these things were all forgotten. Rose was as much under the dominion of one idea as a saint in ecstasy. She was not conscious of the fact, but, as the train rushed noisily through London and the dreariness of outlying suburbs, through country towns, villages, and fields, woods and orchards, the past of Princes Street and Rosalie had already slipped away. The period of transition that the clock had ironically recorded as two days was also over, and Rose waited, wide-eyed and unsuspecting, under the fingers of the future.

Templeton had sent her a wedding ring the day before, wrapped in a letter. She sat now sliding it up and down her unaccustomed finger. The touch of it gave her an indescribable sensation; it made her laugh and tremble. She had read somewhere in a fairy tale that the root of the fourth finger of the left hand is placed in the heart itself, and that is why

that little finger is strong enough to bear, until death, the wedding ring with its burden of joy or else of heavy sorrow. It did not occur to her that her ring was of spurious metal. She wore it as the symbol of her own love. It was Templeton's ring, and it rested on her finger as Templeton's letter rested on her heart, each the guardian of all that from henceforward belonged only to him.

The train stopped or it went on; people got in and out, but Rose sat and heard nothing, she scarcely knew if her carriage was full or empty. A pretty young woman traveling with a nurse and a small child of some two years spoke to her over the lid of a luncheon basket, and after her first start of surprise Rose was able to reply, and with a further effort even to chat about the scenery, the coast, and the various holiday resorts with which they were both acquainted. They lunched together and by degrees the conversation became more intimate. Then there was a pause. The baby was sleeping in his nurse's arms when suddenly his mother turned from him to Rose with a smile and a question on her lips.

"Have you any children?"

For a moment Rose did not hear, she did not take in the sense of the words flung at her. It was repeated and then clasping her hands nervously she felt her wedding ring—her gloves were lying in her lap—and the touch of it enlightened her, but at the same time it spread a crimson banner about her cheeks.

Her companion laughed at her confusion. "I beg your pardon," she said impulsively, "you have not been long married?"

"No—not long."

"Ah, well, perhaps you will have children some day?"

"Yes—yes!"

The young mother was surprised at her nervousness, she laughed still more and launched out still further into her subject. She felt that she was older than this charming person she had made friends with—older and more experienced.

"It would be very sad to have no children, would it not? You do agree with me—I see that you do! Fancy, to have no

child! To grow old with your husband, but to have nothing that you can both love as you love each other. It would be dreadful!"

"Yes, dreadful—dreadful!"

"All women do not think so."

Rose was silent.

Her companion grew a little uncomfortable. Perhaps in talking to a stranger she had said too much. "You *do* agree with me?" she questioned once again.

"Oh yes, yes!"

But Rose could not talk any more: something choked her. It seemed as though her ring had lifted her into some unknown country. What evil fate had prompted the woman opposite her to speak! She wished she would be quiet. She might want to continue the acquaintance, she might even ask her name! This last surmise struck her with a further shock. Her name! What was her name? Not Templeton, alas—not Rose de Winton—what then? She could not answer the question.

But these things had come to Rose as mere specks upon the mirror of her happiness. Later, when driving in a hired brougham with Templeton, during the last stage of what appeared to her to be an interminable journey, she questioned him on the subject.

He bent to her, knitting his brows blackly while his eyes laughed. She was beginning to learn his tricks of gesture. She had seen that before, and she knew that he was amused. She was like a dog reading its master's face.

"Your name?" he repeated. "The name your godfathers and godmothers——"

"No, the name you have given me—at least, I suppose I am to have one!"

"Oho! Would you like to give it to yourself instead?"

"No."

"Well you couldn't, even if you wanted to, because the deed is already accomplished. You are Mrs. Gray—a highly suitable name for you, Rose, don't you think so? You—with your red lips, and flamboyant hair. But you must ask me no

more questions—you are not to know where you are going, or what is to happen to you. The desire to know one's own name is, I confess, reasonable. You have been for one whole day nameless—nobody—nothing! How delightful! How fantastic! A peri wandering between sky and earth, seeking an identity. My dear Rose, I bestow it upon you. I recreate you, metaphorically, out of my own rib. You are Mrs. Gray—a person of great beauty, and, as your name implies, of irreproachable morals. The object of your existence is to exist—and by so doing, to make yourself indispensable to the person who called you into being—myself!”

Rose laughed, of course he was talking nonsense, but she was well content, she reached out a timid hand and touched his coat. He felt the pressure: it was as though a butterfly had alighted upon it: but it fitted in with his mood to affect ignorance and to chat of the commonplaces of their journey. He could not see her, for darkness had closed in upon them, but he knew then that her mouth drooped at the corners. This amused him too. He leaned back, looking out of the window. Suddenly he flung out an arm and drew her towards him. As her head fell upon his shoulder and her body drooped he listened for the quick catch in her breath that he knew must come. When it came he laughed out loud. He ran his fingers over her cheeks and lips, and felt that they were wet, for the tears dropped slowly down her face on to his coat. Surely she was delicious, this Rose of his—delicious as April, and as full of promise! His intuition had not failed him.

The carriage rolled on between fields clothed in mist, then on one side a shadowy copse appeared, and a stream followed the road. Afterwards the carriage turned, crossed the stream and ascended a rough piece of ground to high moorland. Here on the short turf, sheep with their nestling lambs, looked like white stones, and a dim pony moved among them like an uncouth spirit. A new freshness in the air began to be felt, and still they ascended. Suddenly below them the sea stretched its immensity. The somber color of its surface was to-night broken by lights which told of a different life moving upon its bosom. Green and white in the morning, the surrounding cliffs

were now dull gray, while at their foot a little village stretched more lights to the water's edge.

"That is Tremellon," said Templeton suddenly, pointing to the flicker, "and Tremellon, my dear Rose, is a place that you will remember until your dying day."

The girl leaned from the carriage window, taking the impression of the lights below her and the veiled color of the sea, photographing it upon her mind: the fresh wind blew the scent of heather in her face; she leaned out still further. The little place hung shadowy, enveloped in the mystery of night; but its lights seemed to Rose to flicker like pleasant, friendly stars.

Then she drew back and turned to her companion.

"You are quite right—now—even now—I shall remember Tremellon until my dying day."

When the carriage stopped finally, the fishing village was out of sight; Rose could hardly see where she was, but she realized at last, a gate, a sloping path, some steps, and the roof of a cottage immediately below her.

"Is this——?" leaning on the arm that helped her to alight, she questioned Templeton in a half sentence.

"Yes," he said shortly. "Go on slowly and mind the steps." He turned to pay for the carriage while Rose picked her way cautiously along the incline, another turn, another gate, and then once more Tremellon flaunted its friendly lights from far below her to the left. To the right the white-washed walls of a cottage shone as luminous as the tall clumps of tobacco plants which stood about the porch. The garden sloped to the cliff's edge, and here also the alchemy of night had been at work: the roses, the delicate honeysuckle, the great fuchsia bushes, were all colorless gray—pale ghosts of their morning radiance.

As Rose stood in the half light straining her eyes, the front door of the cottage opened and an elderly woman, followed by a young girl holding a lamp, came out.

"Dear heart, but where be they!" she cried; and then seeing a solitary figure standing in the shadow, added nervously: "What's that?"

"It's me. We've come," said Rose.

The woman broke into a flood of words. "Well now, just to think of et. I heerd a sound like as if wan o' the beasts had got loose unbeknown'st, and was trampperling the blooms, when Cherry ses, 'Aunt, it's they!' 'Go on,' sez I, 'Cherry, yu're daft, I'll pay no heed to you; 'Hope deferred maketh the heart sick,' and I've had this blessed dinner on my hands for wan hour and a half! Ordered fur nine o'clock it weer, but I looked out all the same, and theer I sees a vean pisky standin' theer quiet in the shadow. You'll excuse me, ma'am, if I mak tu free, theers naw offense in my wards, but as sure as I'm Sarah Renowden, the very moment an idee comes into my mind, it's in my throat. But theer—theer's more sense in Cherry than I gaved her credit fur. Coom yu wayst in ma'am, coom yu wayst in! An' wheer's the good gentleman? Ay, he's seeing to the bits o' things! To be sure! To be sure! Well, coom yu wayst in, yu belong to be dead tired with ee's journey. Dinner's all ready as I told ee—ready and waiting, and theer's nothing like a dinner to put a good complexion on a place, now is theer?" Without pausing to take breath, she led the way into the house, and for the first time Rose realized that she was very tired. She stumbled on the threshold, and turning into the first room she came to, sank down into the nearest chair. The woman took the lamp from Cherry, and, bending low, held it near to Rose's face. She swept a quick glance over the weary figure. "Poor lamb," she said suddenly, "yu're well nigh done with them polrumptious trains and things, and yu not long a wife, I'll dare be bound. Look yu here, my dear—ma'am—I am sure I beg your pardon Mrs. Gray—ma'am—as I mentioned before, yu'll not take what I say as being too free—yu just set yu down here where yu be, and let Cherry unbutton your boots—it do make a most wonderful easement to take your boots off and let your feet swell into whatever shape they've got a mind to—it do relieve yu wonderful, and no mistake."

By force of will, Mrs. Renowden would have removed the boots had not Templeton come up and required her services. Pouring out much experience, she then left her charge in the

care of Cherry and trotted out to meet him. Afterwards, from where she sat, Rose could hear their voices in the upper rooms.

Cliff cottage belonged to an artist who was waited upon by Mrs. Renowden and Cherry. He was at present abroad for an indefinite period, and was glad to let the house to anybody who would take with it his two retainers. Templeton remembered the place, he had seen before, when staying in the neighborhood, that it had been "to let." A telegram sent a house-agent brought an immediate reply. He took the cottage for one month, the tenancy could be extended if he desired it. Now when he had inspected the inside of his new dwelling, he turned to Rose, whom he found laughingly resisting the well-meant efforts of Cherry to remove her boots.

"Go and take off your things, Rose," he said quickly. "Your rugs and dressing case are in the front bedroom; your boxes will follow presently. My bedroom and dressing-room are opposite. Don't stay there, but be down to dinner as quick as you can, there's a good girl! I'm literally starving!"

Mrs. Renowden stumped off to the kitchen. "Now, that's a mighty masterful man!" she said to herself as she shut the door behind her. "Av coorse he's hungry, so's she, but some women might have no stommicks at all for all their husbands think of them! And he's lovin' with her, too, mighty lovin', I could see that, he'll be moor masterful when that's passed. Poor dear! She'll want a woman's care soon, I'll dare be bound. To think of her going off so fainty like, the minute she'd set foot inside the house! Well, well, in spite of the ghastly hour, these fowls be done to a turn, and there be nothing better than the liver wing of a fowl done proper, with bacon and bread sauce, to make a man look kindly upon his wife."

So saying; the good soul applied herself to dishing up the chickens, while Cherry waited hot-cheeked and breathless for the tray.

Mrs. Renowden had a widow's wisdom. His dinner concluded, Templeton looked upon his Rose with very kindly eyes.

During the meal she had prattled incessantly—he had watched her from underneath his lowered black eyelashes. She was prettier than usual to-night, but there was something strained and feverish underneath the prettiness. Her cheeks were too red and her eyes had dark circles round them. Her manner, too, was jerky and excited.

A summer fire blazed on the hearth; Templeton now lit a cigarette, and drew up an armchair to the comfortable warmth. Rose sat on a stool at his feet, warming her hands. Her hair caught red lights from the fire, and the blood showed through her delicate fingers as she held them up to the glare. A silence had fallen on her.

Templeton smoked without speaking. He was impulsive, but his impulses were well controlled. It was his aim to get as much out of every separate minute of his life as that minute could contain, and for that forethought was required—forethought and a strong will. He now contemplated the prettiness of the girl in front of him. He would have plenty of time—a whole month in which to contemplate it. He enjoyed his own deliberation; it pleased him to think of it. Life was lived with him as it were to music; each minute pondered over, rehearsed, and then enjoyed. A spoiled emotion or a tattered passion would have filled him with a wild regret—regret that he should have thus neglected to realize its value. He organized his emotions with a skill that was genius. He was as wise as the Preacher—he studied all things under the sun—and—at the right time. At last he removed his cigarette.

“You are very tired to-night, Rose. You had better go to bed. It is not good for you to sit up too long after traveling all day.”

For a moment there was silence, then slowly Rose stood up. Again her hands fell at her sides and her bent head, with its aureole, reminded him of some old picture of a saint.

“Good-night,” she said. Her voice had fallen to a whisper.

Templeton knocked the ashes from his cigarette and then put his hand on her shoulder. “I have some proofs to correct to-night; they will take me a long time; they have to go by the early post. Sleep well, we will meet in the morning.”

She stood before him obediently, while he bent and kissed her lightly on the forehead. "Good-night," he said again, "now be off with you!"

Suddenly she lifted her eyes and looked straight into his. Her expression startled him, it was unfathomable; deep love was there, love and pain, also a certain shame that had hitherto been as foreign to her as it would have been to a child or a savage. Then, as suddenly she dropped them, a flood of red mounted slowly to her forehead.

"Good-night," she said again. She turned away, letting her limp fingers brush the table as she passed. On reaching the door, a picture on the opposite wall caught her eye. Forgetful of Templeton, she stood still examining it. It represented an open doorway where a man and woman in their first youth stood facing the spectator. The man was slightly behind the woman; his arms were about her shoulders; his head was bent; there was that in his attitude that told of love that was reverence, reverence that was adoration.

Rose stood for a moment absorbed in the picture. The longing in her heart had grown to a definite hunger, for what, she did not know, for sympathy perhaps, for friendship? No, for all that the woman in the picture possessed in so full a measure—the whole-hearted love of a man.

"What is that picture?" she asked abruptly. Templeton turned, resting his elbow on the arm of the chair. He was amused at her tense attitude.

"That! Oh, that is a picture that appeals to popular sentiment. It is reproduced everywhere. The suburbs delight in it."

"What is it called?"

"It was painted by a man who was of some importance in his day—Leighton."

"I never remember the names of painter or writers. Has that picture a name?"

"It has, indeed," returned Templeton; "it is a painting typically nineteenth century. It is called 'Wedded.' Husband and wife are going home. That is why the suburbs like it; the sentiment is so respectable. In the suburbs husband and wife are perpetually going home." There was a silence. "The

suburbs would approve of those people more than they would approve of us, my dear Rose. We are not at all respectable."

Rose had not heard his last words; she was absorbed in the picture.

"That man"—something of the wail in her heart had risen to her voice—"that man, is very much in love."

"With his wife—yes. What does it amount to? She will have half a dozen children, and grow broad. They will be lucky if they can live together without bickering. That will not be your fate, my dear. Now go, or you will lose your beauty."

With an effort Rose turned away. "Wedded!" Was Templeton right? Was all wedded love doomed to destruction at the outset? Yes, she supposed it was. Experience and her early teaching prompted her acquiescence in this opinion; and yet there was something in her own heart that denied it. She remembered the face of the young woman in the train; she remembered her words:—"To have no child! To grow old with your husband, but to have nothing that you both love as you love each other!" To grow old! This woman had faith in the future. The future!—suddenly Rose shivered. Ah, the future—she did not dare think of it. Templeton's voice for the last time broke across her thoughts; she was still standing in the little dining room. She should have gone before this. "Good-night."

"Good-night." Rose shut the door and crept upstairs to her bedroom.

For some moments she stood quite still with her hands pressed upon her eyes. This was not what she had imagined. She had come to her lover glowing and palpitating with a wonderful emotion, body and soul were his, to use as he pleased. The force of her own passion now returned upon her changed to ice. He would love her—oh, yes, she had no doubt of that—he was now her acknowledged lover, as many men had been the acknowledged lover of Rosalie, and he would love her as these men loved—at his own time, and for his own pleasure.

Passion stood on one side. He was dilatory, he had given her

time to think. And as she thought, she found that though she had gained her heart's desire, the most she wanted now was solitude and tears. She looked again at her wedding ring, and again there fell upon her the overwhelming strangeness that she had experienced in the train. There were facts, even in the relations of men and women, of which Rose was ignorant—the young mother in the train, happy in her husband and in her child, the couple whose loves were radiant in the sight of God and of their fellow men—these people pointed to an ideal of which Rose knew nothing. She was as Eve standing under the tree of life, but a new Eve, with her apple bitten on one side only. The knowledge of good and of evil is a two-fold thing. How could this Rose know even of the significance of evil, having learned so very little of the significance of good?

When Rose had gone, Templeton lit another cigarette, and then ran upstairs to his dressing-room in search of the bag that contained his proofs. These found, he mixed himself a glass of whisky and water, and sat down to an evening of hard work. His brain was clear and his hand steady; the proofs progressed quickly; soon the last page lay finished upon the table. Then he leaned back in his chair and contemplated with satisfaction, first his work, and then the possibilities for enjoyment that this situation so common in its form, so unique in its essence, afforded. He was exceedingly pleased with himself. He had put into practice his theory of the art of life, and the effort—for it had been a real effort to issue his austere commands—had produced a glow. In other words his folly—regulated to emulate a virtue—produced in him the spiritual exaltation that has its roots in virtue. Templeton realized the sin that once tripped up an angel—spiritual pride; he felt at his heart the “vile consciousness of virtue!” Thus do good and evil act and react, the one upon the other, but in some souls a hidden salt, it seems, makes evil good, while in others good itself is turned to evil. Who shall dare to sift—nay, more—who shall dare define them?

His speculations ended—no man can contemplate for an indefinite period even his own virtues—Templeton pushed

away his papers, and passing to the window, flung it open. The night air rushed in; a part of that blue immensity filled the room. The stars flickered far away and cold. A sound of the lapping of waves rose up from the beach. Templeton was quick to catch this strange beauty, and it played upon him as the wind plays upon an Eolian harp. For him, suckled in no particular creed, Proteus rose ever from the sea, old Triton blew perpetually upon his horn. It was that echo that sounded in his poems and drew the approbation of the world. But the unheard music and the unseen pictures that are the property of the poet and the artist—and Templeton was both in no small degree—are things aloof from the common passions of mankind. To the artist, the emotions produced by a sunset or the sound of the wind in the tree is a reality that endures, while ordinary human joy or sorrow is a passing sensation; for him pity is lost in contemplation, love in self-consciousness, while long-suffering and sacrifice become strange lunacies. Nero, the incarnation of the artistic spirit, sought his fulfillment on the material plane and became a monster—a monster who was ridiculous! Templeton—the artist of a latter age—realized in a manner strangely ironical, that it is “the spirit, indeed, that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.”

To-night when he at last shut the window the clock on the mantelpiece struck two, and by that time even Rose had fallen asleep.

Chapter Five

"Oh, bitterly beloved, and all her gain
Is but the pang of unpermitted prayer."

ROSSETTI

AS her new life at Tremellon shaped itself more definitely, the vague misgivings that had haunted Rose at the beginning sank into her past—into nothingness. She opened out like a flower in the light. Her skin grew brown with the sun and wind; her hair fell in natural waves about her face (there were no hairdressers in Tremellon); little tricks of speech and gesture fell away from her, and the freshness that had as by a miracle survived, not only the perilous atmosphere of Princes Street, but actual stubborn facts hard to surmount, showed itself in her never-ending wonder at her new environment. She ran barefooted upon the sand; she learned to cook in Mrs. Renowden's kitchen; she mended her clothes in company with Cherry. Her life with Templeton after that first ominous home-coming, was all she had ever dreamed it might be. Everything was new to her, everything a surprise. And, indeed, she had arrived at the realization of herself—the true Rose, marvelously easily considering the circumstances of her life. She shook the dust of the past off her feet with amazing swiftmess. A little difficulty, a few tears were inevitable, for the road she now trod led her to a new view of life and of her fellow men, and it puzzled her. She was shy and suspicious; she doubted the honesty of Mrs. Renowden, she was not sure that Cherry did not lie and steal and listen behind doors. What wonder! all her life she had either done or suffered wrong, the impression was not one that would lightly pass away.

After she had been at Tremellon for some ten days an incident occurred which opened her eyes still further. During breakfast, Templeton had received from his valet—who remained in town and forwarded all correspondence—a fat letter

sealed with a red seal. It was from his friend the Comtesse de la Cherois, and consisted of six closely written pages in a fine feminine handwriting. Its appearance stirred Rose's heart, and took away her appetite. She watched him furtively across the tea-tray as he read it. After that, the letter stood between her and her usual chatter. Templeton noticed the change and guessed the reason, but he said nothing. When he went out to paint—he was doing a series of pastels of the coast for an autumn exhibition—he left the letter, face downwards in the drawer of the little writing-table which also contained a new box of pastels. On the way to the rocks he remembered that a certain color was missing and returned for it. He opened the drawer; his letter had been moved and was now lying reversed, to the left of the pastel. "*Tiens!*" he said quickly. It was only what he had expected, but the discovery made him laugh. He lifted the letter and held it up before him. "*Tiens!*" he said again. Then he looked at it. It had been read and replaced in the envelope hurriedly, for the delicate sheets were crumpled, and one corner of the paper was turned down across the coronet that showed in the center. Templeton could hear Rose moving overhead. He stood at the foot of the staircase and called to her.

"Rose!"

"What?"

"Come down."

"What for?"

"I want to ask you something."

She came down, her cheeks were hot and her eyes clouded; once more Templeton was inclined to laugh.

"Why did you read my letter?"

There was silence. Rose stood in her usual attitude with her hands dangling straight at her sides, only this time she twisted one foot under her and looked at him, sulky, but appealing, from under her golden-brown eyelashes.

"There was nothing in it, although it *was* from a woman," she said at last, pouting. "There was only a lot of talk about books and poetry and stuff. There was nothing to find out. I didn't do any harm." She had by this time become apologetic,

for his manner frightened her. "What did I do?" she added defiantly.

"You did what a prying housemaid would have done," said Templeton.

Anger stung Rose into a retort.

"How dare you say that! How dare you! You would have done the same if I had received a letter that—looked like that—a letter with such a lot of pages and a great red seal."

Templeton did not reply, and she, glancing up, surprised at the sudden silence, met his eyes—scornful and very cold. Suddenly she felt the absurdity of her last remark. It was absurd. Templeton would *not* have read her letter. But why was it absurd? She did not know. She fell back upon her first excuse.

"It did not do you any harm. I did not hurt you."

"You hurt yourself."

"Myself—how?" She was intensely puzzled.

"You did an impossible thing, my dear Rose. There are certain unwritten laws that exist among civilized educated people, and one is that they do not read each other's private letters when each other is out on the rocks painting. Do you see?"

"I don't see! It's all a lot of nonsense," she tossed her head defiantly. She had been unutterably hurt and in spite of his words, she was still puzzled as to the precise nature of her offense. "It's all of lot of——" Her voice broke into sudden sobs. She rushed out of the room and into her bedroom.

Templeton heard the key turn in the lock. Then he laughed again—at himself this time, rather than at her, and picking up the missing pastel, put it in the box. Then he walked slowly down to the rocks. On the way he met Cherry coming up from the beach with a couple of soles that she had just bought from a fisherwoman. The girl gave him a shy smile.

"Cherry," he cried, "I see you smiling at me! How dare you smile at so venerable a person! I exist like the Apocrypha for 'an example of life and instruction in manners.' I learned those words when I was a boy, and they are singularly applicable to me in the situation in which I find myself."

Cherry smiled still more and bobbed a curtsy. She was accustomed to Mr. Templeton and his queer ways.

Later on in the morning when his sketch was finished and the soles that Cherry had brought lay upon the luncheon table crisp and golden, Templeton found a demure and penitent Rose, whose red eyes told that her lesson had been learned. To her whispered apology he dealt forgiveness.

"Our moral lessons shall be conducted with fewer emotions in the future—eh, Rose? Morality without tears—my system if widely known would regenerate the world."

Thus was Rose's education in the conventions of society (Templeton called them the "elements of morality") carried on; and the teacher was supplied to her by Fate, the satirical goddess who superintended the instructions, laughing in her sleeve perhaps, at both pupil and professor. Rose learned that the well-bred world did not read on the sly the letters addressed to others; she learned also that many other things that seemed to her to be equally natural were taboo. She began to realize a code of honor—and a difficult one for a girl, strange to any code of honor, to understand. Her own existence as Templeton's mistress would have appeared at first sight to refute his teaching, only that that teaching when applied to issues large enough invariably fell short. Then apparently the impossible became the commonplace. The things that the well-bred child draws in with his mother's milk were sprung suddenly upon Rose at an age ripe for speculation, and as she began to understand the paradox contained in the morality of the world, so her puzzle grew, and she remained silent. She accepted, however, after her first hesitation, the simple goodness of the people about her, in so frank and whole-hearted a manner, that they became her devoted servants, ready to do anything that she might ask them.

And from that time the quiet presence of Mrs. Renowden, Cherry, and the fisher people down in Tremellon, added yet another element to her happiness. Her cup was full, but she did not dare look forward. And yet, strange to say, she was almost entirely happy, as she stood thus blindfolded between

ecstasy and fear. Such an attitude was inevitable for one whose life hung on another's pleasure. She knew all Templeton's moods. She watched his face as a wise sailor watches the sky. He fondly imagined, when busy with his system for her instruction, that she learned from him not only in morality but in history and English literature. And so, indeed, she did, but she learned something that he had never contemplated teaching. She learned to refrain from argument on the difficult question of the possible and the impossible, she even refrained from questions of any kind; and as time went on she learned to accept all he told her unhesitatingly, as she saw that such acceptance pleased him. These things, after all, mattered very little, she did not trouble about them; all her strength went into her desire to keep him with her. She scarcely thought of Rosalie, but one day her mother's remark that the pink dancing dress properly managed could have married Rose, flashed into her mind. She remembered how she had repudiated the notion. She had not wanted anything so difficult and remote as marriage. She had wanted love. But the human heart is never satisfied, and gradually the remote became the near, the incredible became a thing distant but within reach. The strange omens of her arrival at Tremellon occurred to her time after time. She thought of the young woman in the railway carriage, and she looked at the print above the sideboard and wondered if it would ever be her lot to enter her own home like the woman in the picture, wedded to the man she loved. She desired marriage for no other reason than as a straightening of the tie that existed between herself and Templeton, and this idea once formed in her mind became an ever present thought, the background as it were on which the rainbow of her immediate happiness showed distinct. Life at Tremellon was so satisfying that it seemed to her impossible that it should ever end for either of them. Her happiness was bound up in Templeton. How should she realize that what was everything to her, was to him one side or rather one color only, in that which made up her entire prism.

When Templeton was busy painting or writing, Rose spent

her time either on the rocks or in the village. The fisher-people were full of surprises for her. She liked sitting at the open hearths and superintending the cooking of girdlecakes. She knew where the great boughs were kept that made them firing, and when tea was over she tucked up her sleeves and, with the usual remonstrances from her hostess—helped in the washing up. In this way she gathered a quantity of village gossip that she recounted to Templeton over coffee and cigarettes in the evening.

She heard how John Peter Bosustow was a wonderful rich man; how he had been brought up to poverty until his mother, old Tab the washerwoman, died, leaving him a mint o' money in a stocking under one o' the beams in the floor. She heard how Mary Gannet was no better than she should be, how she had gone to London to learn dressmaking and had returned full of all sorts of strange fooleries that had the young men of the place by the ears. She heard of a poor half-witted girl who lived, it seemed, a double life, being possessed by a familiar spirit. She learned something of everybody at Tremellon. She learned the manners and customs of the little place, its austerities and dissipations. It had once stoned an artist for breaking the Sabbath by painting on the beach, and yet on a Saturday night it was not safe for a woman to cross the Gap between Tremellon and the high cliffs, because the drunken fishermen collected in the Five Alls that stood at the junction.

Rose used also to question Mrs. Renowden, for dearly did the old woman love the sound of her own voice. She would sit oblivious of time, recounting ancient histories while holding one end of her blue apron.

A witch lived over at Penolver across the moor—so Rose had heard—a witch who could tell fortunes and turn the evil eye on those that crossed her. The Tremellon men were as much afraid to pass her cottage after dusk as the women were to cross the Gap on a Saturday night. Rose wondered if it were all true.

"Sech things are best not spoken of," replied Mrs. Renowden when questioned on the subject. "It isn't permitted to

inquire tu deep into the ways of evil," she added, after a pause, as though afraid that Rose might take her at her word and ask no more.

But Rose saw that the old woman was bursting with her subject.

"You knew the witch when she was a girl?" she insisted. "They said you did. Tell me about her when she was young. You can leave out the evil."

Mrs. Renowden laughed. "I doubt but that's tu difficult, miss—I should say ma'am." Mrs. Renowden never could remember to give Rose the title of a married woman. "The evil was bred in un; it only outed to a little provocation, as one might say."

Rose sat silent, for Mrs. Renowden was now launched upon a sea of talk.

"Well you must know," she began, "that years ago when I weer a cheeld, there weer a man who lived down aneist the white cottage by the Gap—Mrs. Carthew's cottage it is naw."

"A man!" broke in Rose. "But I want the story of the witch."

"Set you quiet," said Mrs. Renowden, "an belike you'll hear. The story I'm tellin' you is the story of a maid to be sure—be very sure that suner or later it'll be the story of a man as well. Do you want to know anything else?"

"No," said Rose.

"Waal then," continued Mrs. Renowden. "There was a man who lived down aneist the white cottage by the Gap. His name was Trewarra, and a fine upstandin' man he weer, straight the way down from shoulders to cheens, with a red beard and blue eyes. He weer wan o' the Methodies an' you'd hear his Amens an' So-be-its above all the clack at mitten. He weer a mighty respec'able man, and if any pusson had ever coom up wi' tark agin' his respec'ability, foak would 'a' jeered that pusson fen. Waal so it happed that theer was a maid who lived in a house nearby to t'other end o' the Gap. I be coom to the maid, you see ma'am."

"Is she the witch?" said Rose, drawing nearer to the old woman.

"Aye, she be the witch, Meg Doon, and a queer whist life she lived in those days along to her granddam all alone, for the mother and faither baith died when she weer but a cheeld. An' Trewarra passed by her house on his way down to the boats, an' could see her always a-looking out o' an upper window like a lone white dove. She weer a comely maid tu, fresh in the faace and round in the bosom wi' saft brown eyes like a young calf, and hair that grawed low on the forehead an' parted natral.

"Waal Trewarra came reglar an' bymeby he took to stoppin' to pass the time o' day wi' she, an' she took to lookin' for his stoppin' and Trewarra knawed it, and the thought made un go flimsy like. Trewarra had bin a great man for wumman before he took releegion, an' a wife; so he knawed the feelin' well, an' he knawed tu that he belonged tu taak raisan with un an' gaw down to the boats another way. An' so he done it, but his hands shook, an' all the time he weer busy with his nets his mind was fretted wi' regrettin' what he had done—which is the way of a man. An' the thought of un was that yeasty in un that at evenin' what must he du but go round by the cottage an' undu all the vartue he had set his soul on in the marnin'. He was strong on the Scriptures tu, he prayed terrible. As he took the path to the cottage he weer prayin' all the while to be kep' out o' harm's way, and indeed his mouth was bustin' with prayers right up to the moment when he spued 'em out for to kiss the maid. An' after that un didn't seem to have no further use for 'em, which when one coomes to think on it, was only natral tu.

"Meg Doon was nothin' loth fur un, for she was of an 'oncomin' disposition, an' purty well nigh daft about the man, an' she kep' her secret tight which is a wumman's way. So the thing went on, all unbeknownst, yu understand; it went on purty well nigh into the summer of the next year; ontill wan day Trewarra coomed up after dusk to Meg Doon an' telled she right out plop that all their love days weer at an end. Someone had seen the pair down aneist the old chalk pit wheer they used tu mit, and had carried the news to Trewarra's wife, who was purty nigh crazed. She, yu may weel

b'lave, made things roastin' for Trewarra and under the influence of an uncommon troublesome house, all the prayers an' texts that he had spued out times past coomed back sudden, like flies about Trewarra's head. So wance more he bore hisself like the respec'able man he weer, an' a Methody. He braced hisself wi' the word of God an' he went down to Meg Doon's place to tell her that he was dead set on vartue and that they must part forever.

"The gal took that news ill, for the man was heaven and airth to her, an' the marrow o' her own bones. She clinged to un with her soft wheedlin' body—mighty strong she weer, and mighty cunnin', by reason av her g'eat sorrow. Then she begged an' prayed him in the name of God an' of her ain mother, not to give her up.

"At first Trewarra was well nigh wan auver, for he loved the gal, an' he wrastled tarrible with his respec'ability. He was shocken wracked, poor sowl, with the flesh pullin' wan way an' respec'ability the other. But in the end he stood firm to vartue. 'Naw,' says he, 'I must break thickey bargain an' save my sowl alive an' quiet the wife; for when it cooms to the fight, it stands tu raison 'tis she must win, for coom weal, coom woe, she's my wedded wife, an' the mother of the cheeldurn, an' she can raise the devil hisself with a sharp tongue.'

"An' then Meg Doon put out her last weapon, an' that made him flinch sommat. But even what she called up then to his mind did not shake him, for he was now firm set on the side o' the right, an' what was wan gal an' her bastard against a man's conscience an' his awn wife, to say nought of the Methodies and six cheeldurn born in lawful wedlock.

"Saw he tould her the bare truth, an' at first it missed her, for she stared wi' blank eyes, but when it pierced her onderstandin', it reached down to her heart and cruddled it sudden like to poison. She said nought at first, but the poison warked inside her with shocken torments, and after a minnit, she let out wan scrich—like a hiss it weer, and not like the scrich of mortal wumman. An' with that hiss she up cursed he, an' she called upon the devil to drive home the curse, for from hence-

forward her hand was against man an' against God. She cursed Trewarra, bone, blood, and muscle, eyes and teeth, nails an' hair. She cursed his body an' she cursed his sowl. She cursed him with all the hate of her g'eat love. She cursed him in uprisin', an' in lyin' down. She cursed him in eatin', drinkin', an' begettin' cheeldurn. She cursed him to his dying day, an' she cursed his sowl upon its journey to the next warld. Never was theer heerd sich a strammin' curse. She cursed him by the cheeld she carried in her body, whose life she said would go to buy his death. The devil's fire shawed in her eyes, an' 'tis said that her hair stood awt oop to each side o' 'er head, as though blawn by a wind.

"Then she tarned awl to sudden white like whey, an' flingin' herself oopon the stawn floor oop agin' the waal, she sobbed her sawl oot, an' it seemed as though her chest must burst, so g'eat was the weight o' sorrow put upon it. Naw, when Trewarra saw her tears he took comfort, for he thought the curses must be drowned in the floods of water her poor eyes let out o' 'em; an' awf he went without another ward. But it seemed as though his prayers had gone sour in his mouth, and his psalms weer now naw maar then sawnd, an' it seemed as though the devil that Meg Doon had called oop to help un hung black an' grinning between hisself an' God; which was a hard thing for un, seein' that he was a respectable man an' a Primitive, who had wrastled sore wi' the flesh which in him warked more powerful than in most. An' he had loved the maid tu, an' her smiles an' saft clinging ways wi' a man's love, so it weer naw smawl thing for un to mak the mistryst an' declare hisself, for all her cryin', on the side o' vartue. An' after that when naw spiritual consolations came to un, he felt downright cozened, an' that there hanging black thing what giggled continual, weer a ferttin' trial to un.

"An' arter that Meg Doon's curse began to take reel effect. First o' all a toothache coomed to Trewarra—a mere pinprick av a thing—but when the tooth was drawed it grew worse, which showed it weer naw ordinary toothache, but wan o' the devil's awn. Then the doctor he cooms an' sez to the man mighty serious. 'Don't you werret, my man, nor tak

thought fur anything, fur you've got a cancer in your jaw that a cheerful mind may stay, but that a werretting spirit will feed, so as in time it'll be your maister. Naw that's easy tarkin', but a man wi' a curse on un werrets natral, just as he eats an' drinks. An' Trewarra werretted an' werretted, an' werretted—a little more each day, an' a little more each night, until to the end, his mind grew dazed an' his body became wan g'eat stinking sore. An' when that time coomed he gaved oop creenin' auver his body, an' he turned his mind oopon his poor blind sowl which he knew was doomed even as his body. But he had wan more kick let in un; saw wan day he oops an' sends for Meg Doon, an' she cooms an' stands white an' ghost-like to his bed. Her bastard had been born befor its time, an' she held it in her arms, a wee scrimp av a thing hovering between two warlds.

"'Yer a witch!' sez Trewarra.

"'Maybe,' sez Meg Doon, 'for my sawl was yours, an' you gived it very blithful to the devil. Boot,' sez she, 'never did I know before that he'd be the good maister he be to his light-o'-loves—a better mate than ever you were, Trewarra.'

"'Take aff your ill-wish,' sez Trewarra, sendin' out a howl.

"An' then Meg Doon up an' larfed—she larfed high an' shrill like the wind in the chimbley on a starmy night—she larfed, an' she larfed, an' she larfed. An' she lifted the cheeld high above her head.

"'A life fur a life!' sez she, 'Fur eight long months I've carried a man cheeld in my body, and I've brought him forth wi' sorrow and strong cryin'. I'll bear twins now, I say, to him as has me this time, an' this travail ull be a frolicsome thing—an' you, Trewarra, you'll be theer to help it out!'

"Foak du say that as she lifted the cheeld in her arms, it gave wan gasp an' deed, and Trewarra strowed to be let gaw as easy. But Meg held un tight. An' when she'd left the house, she still held un. She kep' he on the border o' the next warld all the neet, for the poor sawl never passed until the marnin', an' terrible hard wuz Trewarra put to it at the last.

His wife weer skeered silly, an' awl night long the six cheeldurn lay huddled in the chimbley cawner listenin' to his shrieks."

Here Mrs. Renowden paused and wiped the sweat off her forehead with her apron; it was a hot day and she had told her story energetically.

"After Trewarra's death," she went on, "the widow an' her cheeldurn left the neighborhood, an' was never heard of maw. An' that's the story o' Meg Doon," she added in conclusion.

"And she is alive still?"

"Yes, o' coorse, miss, she's alive reet enough. She lives up by Penolver Moor in a queer, uncanny bit o' a cottage. Foak walk half a mile round rather than pass it, an' manny is the marriage she've made up, an' the berrin'—God save us—she've had a hand in."

"Everybody knows that she is a witch then?"

"Ay, that do they. You can see her any day gatherin' her stinking fumetory an' aal the other simples as the devil's awn can use for their maister's work."

Rose was silent, thinking deeply. "How strange," she said at last. "And she did not know that she was a witch until she had cursed Trewarra and the curse came true?"

"Why no, how should she? She cursed un an' the curse warked. Naw doubt about that, the curse warked truly. Maybe she'd been a witch and bewitched the poor man from the very start—an' him married an' a Methody! Maybe that was so and neither she naw him knawed it, until her trouble brought her reet natur to the surface."

When Rose left Mrs. Renowden's kitchen, she felt curiously depressed. The old woman had told her story graphically and bit by bit Rose had followed it in imagination. She had seen the girl cursing her sweetheart with the hate of love. She had seen Trewarra dying of that curse, and she shuddered. Could such things really be? There was no doubt about it in the minds of the village people. Meg Doon was a witch; marriages and funerals had come about through her agency.

Anxious to shake herself free from the gloomy visions raised by the story, Rose got her needlework and sat under the great fuchsia bush at the bottom of the garden, where the cliff dropped down sheer into the sea, but as her needle pricked the linen, she still turned Mrs. Renowden's story over and over in her mind. It filled her with an unreasoning fear. Again she shuddered and a desire in her went out in an unspoken prayer, to some unknown Power that made for goodness; had she been a Catholic, she would have crossed herself. To her it seemed terrible that the soul of one human being should thus lie at the mercy of another. Meg Doon had cursed Trewarra, and yet Meg Doon's own soul had blackened and withered in Trewarra's keeping. How terrible it all was! She saw herself in the girl's place, and with a quick movement dropped her work to cover her face with both her hands.

What would she do if Templeton deserted her? But the thought was impossible; she could not picture it. He was so good, so honorable! Never before had she met anybody like him. He never lied, or cheated, or got drunk, and he behaved always with perfect courtesy. He was refined where other men were coarse, he was abstemious where they were brutish, he was sweet-tempered where they were ruffianly. And—he loved her—she paused—but did he love her? He had never said so. He had laughed at her and teased her; he had been kind to her, and had spent time whimsically over her education; but he had never said that he loved her. Trewarra had loved Meg Doon, and in spite of that he had deserted her. Then she took comfort. Trewarra was a Methodist and had a conscience; in this he differed from Templeton; also, he had a wife with a sharp tongue, and six children. Templeton had none of these encumbrances—no religion, no conscience, no wife, no children, nothing to drag him from her. Rose might keep him yet. Perhaps. And yet a conscience under some circumstances might have worked in him on her behalf. Some men had married their mistresses for conscience's sake, while others had deserted them at the same prompting—she knew that much. On the whole she preferred Templeton as he was. "If he marries me," thought Rose, "he will marry

me for love only!" For love! Ah, the magic word! It brought the red into her cheeks and the tears into her eyes.

The desire to throw herself with supplication upon some outside Power returned strongly. It was hard to be resisted. Templeton had lent her, lately, the memoirs of a Quaker family, and there she found that these strange people besieged Heaven continually, for their most trivial needs. Her desire was not trivial. It was a matter of life and death. Why should not she pray also? She was trying hard to be good, and God, she supposed, listened to good people. She was conscious of the change that had come to her at Tremellon; she knew that it was not the same Rose that looked at her from the looking-glass, and she knew that this change in the soul expressed itself in many new inhibitions. It would be impossible now for Rose to open a letter not intended for her, as it would be equally impossible for her to make an unfair bargain, for that Templeton had declared to be dishonest. She told the truth, for lies she found exasperated him. She trusted in the good faith of Mrs. Renowden, and was no longer afraid to leave Cherry alone with her jewelry. Also, she put away her clothes, kept her bedroom tidy, and came down to breakfast at the same time every day to pour out Templeton's coffee, and these things, for a nature indolent and careless, to whom discipline was unknown, had not been achieved without effort. Conscious of this effort, she felt that it established her right to pray. And yet she hesitated. She was not a married woman, but that was not her fault, she argued; she wanted to be married, dear God how much she wanted it! If He would grant her prayer, there would then be no obstacle to her being quite good, and goodness, from her new point of view, was a lovely and most comfortable thing. Again she thought of the young woman in the train. To be married and have a child! Could it ever be? Oh, the wonder of the thought!—the blessed wonder!

So Rose put her hands together and she made a prayer.

"Pray God, make Mr. Templeton love me, for I love him so much and pray God make me a good girl. Amen."

Templeton had insisted on her using his Christian name,

and this she did shyly, and always after a short pause, but now she used the formal title as being more fitting in speaking of one so far above her. She considered also that she would not ask for too many things at once. If God granted her prayer, Templeton would marry her; and then perhaps, she might pray to have a child, that they might both love, or even that she might go to heaven when she died—but this last was an after consideration, a thing that she was not at present particularly interested in. She ran upstairs, singing, to dress for dinner: she had forgotten Meg Doon.

While Rose prayed, Templeton came over the rocks slowly, reading a letter. His forehead was puckered into the habitual wrinkle, while the habitual smile flickered upon his lips, but this time surprise was mingled with an amused perplexity. The letter bore his own crest, and ran as follows:

“TEMPLETON MANOR,

“August 24th.

“MY DEAR HUGH:

“It would give your uncle and me great pleasure if you could find time, in the midst of your varied occupations, to pay another visit to Templeton Manor. It must be many years since you were here. Ruth is quite grown up now, and I suspect that we shall find in you only a few traces of the little boy who used to amuse us so much. I heard from Mrs. Whitter that you were in town, and am therefore sending this to Claridge’s to be forwarded. If it would suit you better to come later, will you let me know?

“Your affectionate aunt,

“ELIZABETH TEMPLETON.

“P. S.—Templeton is looking most beautiful. The roses this year have been quite extraordinary.”

Hugh Templeton folded the letter and put it in his pocket. “So Aunt Elizabeth heard from Tom that I was in town,” he said to himself. “And how did Tom know—and what does Tom want?—perhaps that is more to the point? And what does

Aunt Elizabeth want? Well, well! The roses this year have been quite extraordinary, have they?"

He began to wonder what Templeton looked like after this lapse of years—beautiful it always was, but had it altered much? Had Sir Raymond chopped the place—his, Hugh Templeton's, place—out of recognition? Were there Dutch gardens, and Italian gardens, and tropical gardens, and water gardens, and winter gardens, and spring gardens, and rock gardens? He hoped not. His mind worked at the thought. Had Sir Raymond left the tree in which he and Ruth had once made a Swiss-family-Robinson abode still standing?—he wondered.

The thought shaped itself to a desire, the desire grew and became a decision. "I'll go," said Templeton. Thus the thing was disposed of, for his mind once made up, he never permitted himself to contemplate any circumstance that could interfere with his resolve.

Then he thought of Rose. "Rose won't like it." He paused. "But Rose will have to like it." He paused again. "And, by Jove," he added, "I wouldn't like Rose if she did like it!"

Chapter Six

"O Mother, Mary Mother,
Three days to-day between Hell and Heaven!"

ROSSETTI

PENOLVER MOOR was situated some three miles inland behind Tremellon. It stood apart, as it were, in space, under an open sky, blown by a wind that never dropped. The only comfortable thing about it was the far-off line of the coast that showed clear on a blue day, and the rabbits, whose white scuts flashed like lightning from hole to hole, unless for one moment they stood aware, with cocking ears and attentive eyes. The rabbits fulfilled all the functions of rabbit life, and brought up their progeny in the way of rabbit virtue; and the sea told of Tremellon, warm with humanity, nestling at the foot of the high cliffs. These things were the links that bound Penolver to the inhabited world; for the rest it was given up to silence and the unknown. Here and there the short turf grew into clumps of ling; pink centaury and yellow bog asphodel showed themselves, but there were no children to pick the flowers and no birds to break the emptiness, except when an occasional wheatear showed its white tail coverts, as it fitted noiselessly yet fearlessly before some stray human.

Meg Doon's cottage stood in the middle of the moor; it rose abruptly from the green—a patch of white roofed with brown thatch on which clumps of houseleek had somehow found a home. Behind it was a garden sheltered by a hummock of rising ground. Meg worked often in her garden, and although weeds grew freely, her supply of flowers was perpetual. But the Tremellon people did not care to pry in that place, for it was said that the seeds were sown with incantations, and that more than one cutting had been struck miraculously. It was also reported that a giant hemlock that grew

at the far end contained the souls of two sisters who had wasted away mysteriously some time after Meg had arrived at the knowledge of her powers. That their deaths came about in consequence of this knowledge, Tremellon had no doubt. And as to the hemlock, it appeared year after year, and strange wails and whispers issued from its hollow stems. When Meg died, that hemlock would die, too, people said, and the imprisoned souls would then escape to Paradise. In the meantime they were but uncanny neighbors for wholesome flesh and blood. Before the cottage the moor stretched up to the very door, and there on a low bench Meg sat at dusk staring out towards the sea or talking to the half-witted girl, Ann Hand, who passed most of her time at Penolver. Tremellon declared that Ann Hand helped in Meg's devilries, for never before had the old woman, during the fifty-five years that she had lived there, been known to befriend a human creature. But Ann's only relation—an aunt weary from the burden of a large family—denounced such talk with energy, and indeed that she was only too thankful to be so well rid of the poor creature.

The inside of Meg's cottage shone with cleanliness. The floor was tiled with rough red bricks; there was an open hearth, with a rug made of pieces of black stuff and scraps of colored flannels on which three cats, a gray, a black, and a tailless tortoise-shell dozed peacefully. In a recess on one side of the room stood Meg's bed covered with a patchwork counterpane, and on the wall hanging above the bed was a picture of a small blue lady in a crinoline, and a blue gentleman with elaborate whiskers and a full frock coat. This was a weather picture bought at a fair. When rain was imminent, the couple took on blue; when the sun shone, they appeared in pink. Opposite the bed, just under the window, there stood a large horsehair couch mounted in mahogany. This couch had been left to Meg by a woman whose reputation for witchcraft was, as Tremellon put it, no better than it should be. Meg did not flaunt her calling. There were no signs of it visible in the room, except the skin of an adder nailed upon the wall; but that was enough—it answered her purpose.

When a customer from Tremellon sought the devil's aid, the sight of that gray skin strengthened his faith in much the same way that the symbol of the cross might help the Christian. Meg would fasten her black eyes upon him.

"Don't 'ee feel a crim coom oop o'er 'ee?" she would ask.

"I do that"—the reply was unfailing—"when I first set eyes on un I feeled a g'eat sheever from head to heels."

To-day Penolver was more desolate than usual; the sky hung in heavy gray to a copper horizon, while in the west the low rays from the setting sun kindled the moor; light against dark, the stunted trees and the cottage grew large, luminous and unnatural. Meg sat at her door knitting. Her face was yellow and much wrinkled, but every line added something more emphatic to its character. Her eyes were set close together under overhanging brows. Her jaw and cheeks were square and her mouth was a mere slit. She was of medium size, but powerfully built and full of force, yet her hands as she flashed them in and out of her knitting were, for a working woman, delicately small; the fingers long and pointed, the nails filbert shaped, they might have been of iron firmly welded and gloved in the loose, yellow, wrinkled skin. She wore a short skirt, a gray shawl, and a close-fitting white cap tied neatly underneath her chin.

Suddenly she laid down her knitting and listened, shutting her eyes. For all their brilliance they were blind to distant objects, so that the action was merely an aid to concentration. After a few moments the movements that she had discerned became audible, and a woman running towards her across the moor reached her vision. Hair that flamed in the light, eyes innocent and wide, a figure soft, supple, and sinuous—Meg Doon compassed Rose de Winton with a glance. She laughed silently as her thought shaped itself. "A kerning gal, haalf blossom and haalf fruit, yet the bloth be well nigh scattered and the fruit, not fully ripe, be sucked dry. An' what be wantin' she? A lure or a cage? Ess fay a cage. Laws, laws, fur wan man that do be coom a-peddlin' with the de'il fur the forbidden woman, theer be six women

ready to barter their souls for to hould the lawful man. Hey! Hey!" This time Meg laughed aloud. Then she bent forward and spoke. "An' so you've coom to the last," she said. "Three nights and three days have I waited for 'ee."

This was one of Meg's ordinary formulas; it was as certain in its effect as her adder's skin. Her clients seldom spent less than three nights and days of deliberation before finally deciding to visit her cottage, and equally seldom did they realize it, until her words brought the thing home to them like a new truth.

"Yes," returned Rose, "for three nights and days have I thought about this visit. I am very unhappy. Can you help me?"

Meg laughed. "Harken to the cheeld! An' in what way can I help 'ee, my dear? Can I find 'ee a sprig of lad's luvè our to place in 'ees bosom?"

Rose hesitated. Then the fact that she must take this strange woman on her own terms or not at all, made itself felt. "How did you know what I wanted?" she said in a low voice.

Meg was in high good humor; business was beginning and hers was a business that required rare gifts; she was in possession of these gifts and she knew it; the thought filled her with a windy joy—she whirled gloriously upon a spiritual Brocken.

"Hey," she said at length. "'Tis always this—this or that." Then she rose from her seat. "Coom into my gaarden, cheeld, for a vean minnit; we'll git to sober wark in gude time. Thee's not afeered of t'awld wumman?"

"No," Rose shook her head. "I am not afraid of you."

"Thee be tu sick at heart to fear anything!"

Rose nodded.

"So, so," said Meg Doon. "'Tis the luvè sickness, and for some theer be no cure but death. See, here be all the luvè herbs, and theer be that which smells the sweetest to a maid's thinking." She pointed to a bush of southernwood. "Theer be lad's luvè, the plant for 'ee—pick it, cheeld—pick it an' doant 'ee fear or fret. Luvè-in-a-mist be that beyont, some

foaks caal un luve-in-a-tangle, and others devil-in-a-bush—but, by my sawl, 'tis aal the same thing, as I have tested an' du knaw weel. See, heer is heartsease and luve-in-idleness and heer agin be luve-lies-bleeding, but that be not flured 'yet; it blaws after the others be dead an' gone, an' theer's a hidden meaning in that too, do you but see it."

Rose turned away. The witch's singsong voice and the foolish talk fretted her intolerably. It was true that she had pondered this visit for the three days and three nights since Templeton had left her. There were dark rings now round her eyes, and little haggard lines at the corners of her mouth. She was pale and she shivered from time to time. She feared that this solitude might be the precursor of the greater solitude that she dared not contemplate, for it was as the vision of death to a man newly stricken. She had let Templeton go without a word. She had stood before him trembling as he had kissed her a farewell, and she had crept into the house, like a sick animal, to await his return. And all the time Mrs. Renowden's story of Meg Doon had worked in her, until her longing to ask the aid of this woman, old and evil as she had now become, was too great to be resisted. Now that it was done, that she had come, she yearned to let loose the thing that preyed upon her heart. But Meg Doon took her to the garden and chattered of plants and their foolish names, as though there were no such things as life or death, or hell or men, to be reckoned with.

"Meg Doon," she cried at last, and the words seemed to burn her lips as they passed, "I did not come up here to look at your flowers. My heart is breaking. I want the love of the man I love. My life aches for it. I am nearly mad with the pain of that ache. I do not mind what you tell me to say or to do; nothing will be too foolish or childish. People say you have power, and I believe them."

The old woman's manner changed.

"Cheeldish, do 'ee say? Cheeldish? You'll see naw play heer. When you do leave heer you'll be afeered to waak across the moor, because you will 'a' seed some o' they things that be beyont the power of any man in his full wits to reveal

to 'ee. You belong tu be in dead airnest! So be it, an' I, Meg Doon, the witch o' Penolver, be in dead airnest too. You ask a man's luve, eh? Thacky's gowd, eh?—luve is gowd!" Her eyes grew eager and excited. "Have 'ee gowd to buy it with?" She stretched her open hand in front of Rose.

"Yes, I have gold," the girl replied quickly. She opened her purse and dropped a sovereign into the woman's palm.

Meg's fingers did not close on the money. "'Tis not enough," she said hastily. "'Tis three gowd guineas that belongs to me for the power o' this day's wark."

For a moment Rose saw a different face look out from the witch's eyes, and a thought of Rosalie came across her irresistibly in the midst of her pain. "Very well," she said, "I have only one more sovereign left now, but I will bring you the rest when I come again."

Meg jingled the gold pieces together in her hand, then she untied a little bag that hung round her neck and dropped them in.

"Coom you in," she said, "follow me, and strip yure sowl av aal that don't belong to your desire, fur ownly through your sowl will other eyes see clear."

She led the way into the cottage. Ann Hand sat doubled up by the fire, crocheting a piece of string into a long cord. When she saw Rose she clambered to her feet and looked about her anxiously. Rose shrank back against the door; she experienced the shock that came to most people on beholding Ann Hand for the first time. The girl was crooked, half her body was paralyzed, and she had lost the sight of an eye which lolled hideously from its socket. Her hands and feet were deformed. Her speech was thick and unintelligible. Meg Doon was the only person who had ever been kind to Ann, and the imbecile returned her toleration with the love of an animal, crawling to her, fawning on her and at times following her with strange capers. Sometimes Meg gave her a flower or a feather to play with that would occupy her entire attention so that she would forget to crochet or even to eat; and then Meg would send her to sleep upon the great couch that stood under the window, on which maybe others had slept

the same strange sleep in days gone by. This sleep was always a wonder to Meg—as, indeed, were all the effects of her witchcraft. Skeptical at heart they persuaded her to believe in some diabolic power over which, ignorantly, she held control. She was the owner of Aladdin's lamp, and yet she hardly believed in the existence of the genie. She could not explain Ann's trances; all she knew was that she could cause them at her pleasure. One day when working at her patchwork quilt, she had discovered accidentally, that a piece of red flannel or any bright thing placed in front of Ann's sound eye brought about a strange and sudden sleep. Chance, too, rather than deliberate trial, had shown that in this sleep Ann Hand would answer her questions, but the answers appeared to come from a different personality—an imprisoned soul it seemed was ready to talk to her intelligibly for as long as she cared to question it. At first the words had come in disjointed sentences and were hard to fit together, but afterwards with practice, they flowed easily. To Meg, the voice was either that of the familiar spirit which Tremellon assigned to her machinations (and in which she half believed), or else it was the real Ann Hand who spoke, while the deformed body that impeded the clear utterance of the spirit lay quiet upon the couch. Which it was, she could not divine. But the facts were always there before her ready to be used at her pleasure—and in due course, for her profit.

She now placed a chair for Rose, and when she had done so she took Ann Hand by the arm and gently led her towards the couch. She had from long practice obtained so great a power over the girl, that a look was often enough to make her close her eyes. But to-day Ann was excited. She glanced from Rose to Meg Doon, and then burst into frantic laughter. When Meg ordered her to sleep, she gibbered resistance. However, once placed upon the sofa, her body, almost against her will, took on a recumbent position; habit held her and although her mouth still remonstrated, her eyes sought those of her master. Suddenly Meg untied the bag that hung from her neck and took out one of Rose's sovereigns. She held it in front of the idiot's sound eye in such a manner that it caught

the fast fading light. "See here," said Meg, "see here, this red gowd, round—round it be, laike the world—hard an' breet an' sheening, too, it be, laike the warld. Doant'ee see naught else, only this breet, hard, red, round; all else be meltin'—it be mist and shadder. Look agin naw, this breet, hard, round be meltin' tu. It grows smaaler an' smaaler, it be neerly gawn." She paused for a moment and then continued in a wheedling voice. "An' what av Ann, poor cheeldvean she be a'most to sleep, a'most to sleep, a'most—a'most—to sleep."

Meg's cadence fell almost to a song, and as she droned she replaced the sovereign in her bag, but all the time she kept her eyes fixed upon the sleeping girl. Then she put her hands upon the forehead. "Sleep deep," she said. "Sleep deep an' trew, and dont'ee waken till I give 'ee ward." She lifted one of Ann's hands; it dropped back a dead weight upon the coverlet; she pulled down an eyelid; the eyes were turned inwards. The girl was sunk in a heavy slumber; no sound was heard but her thick breathing which was as the breathing of one under the power of ether—no sound but the ticking of the clock on the chimney piece. One of the cats awoke and stretched its claws in the patchwork rug with a faint sound of satisfaction. The minutes passed. Rose sat bending forward, motionless in strong excitement.

Suddenly Meg Doon spoke.

"Where be my gal, Ann Hand?" she asked in a low voice. Rose shuddered, dreading and yet longing to hear an intelligible answer from those uncouth lips.

After a pause it came slow and clear in the singsong of the vernacular; it came through the thick breathing almost as though independent of it.

"Ann Hand be asleep."

Involuntarily Rose started and looked over her shoulder; it sounded like a piece of clever ventriloquism. Meg saw the action and she laughed. "Wheer be your cheeld's play naw?" she said scornfully.

"Who spoke?" said Rose.

"Who be I to tell 'ee that?" answered Meg Doon, speaking quickly. "I doant know the secrets of heav'n an' airth—ainly

a vean bit. The wan that speaks noo is the wan that will help 'ee, and that's all 'tis fit fur 'ee to know."

"Do you mean——"

Meg lifted a finger.

"Don't 'ee mind what I do mean," she said. "Speak. Here we be three. Ask what thee wants, thee 'ull get naw lies heer."

Rose slipped from her chair and knelt by the sleeping girl; she trembled from head to foot; a new emotion seized her and choked in her throat. She could not find voice for her desire. When she spoke, the words came lamely. "I am very unhappy."

She waited, but there was no reply. Ann Hand slept on heavily.

Meg laughed. "Thee shusn't tark like that! Question un an' be doon wi' it."

Still Rose fumbled for words. Her thoughts had fled before her fear.

"Can you see me?" she asked faltering. She summoned up her courage to peer into the immobile face; the eyes were tight shut, the expression never altered. Meg Doon laughed again impatiently. Rose felt that she was very foolish.

This time there came a reply.

"I see 'ee wal. I see the sawl of 'ee."

Rose gained courage; she almost smiled. "My soul! What is my soul like?"

"'Tis laike watter in a man's dreinking cup. He looks into his cup an' sees in it nought but the clear watter an' his own faace. When he be thirsty he will dreenk that watter an' throw the cup away. That is the feel I get o' 'ee as 'ee kneels by me."

"Oh, it is true, it is true!" The words were drawn from Rose by the vivid picture the girl had conjured up. They sprang out from her agony. "Tell me what to do!"

"To save 'ee from un?"

"No, no, I don't want to be saved from him. He could kill me if he liked. I want him to love me, and I want him to love me always—always do you hear? What must I do?"

"Thee must wait." Suddenly the prostrate body stirred.

Ann moved her hands up to her face. They fell back once more upon the couch. Minutes passed before another word came from her. But then she was ready with her answer. She spoke it in a firm voice, as one who has completed a reckoning.

"Thee can marry him," she said, "for he will ask 'ee most certain sure to du this thing."

The words fell upon Rose's heart like a blow. She had no time to ask herself if she was being deceived by this adventure. She heard her heart's desire put into words by one who professed to foretell the future. She heard it spoken of as an event that inevitably would take place. Tears fell from her eyes at the dear shock of such a thought. They came as a health-giving shower after a long drought. She put her head upon the couch and sobbed aloud. At last she raised herself and wiped her eyes. "Can you tell me——" the words came brokenly—"can you tell me when he will ask me—that?"

There was a long silence.

"I canna tell—'ee," for the first time the voice faltered, "it be all as wan to me what is past or what's to coom. Doan't ask me for I canna tell 'ee."

A figure rose up from the darkness, and Meg Doon pushed her little body between the speakers. Bending down she laid her shriveled hands on Ann's forehead.

"See 'ee here, Ann Hand, and I tould 'ee this before. Thee must wark it out. When I gie thee a sum o' figures tu du, thee giv'st me the answer ready made, because 'ee say'st it must be saw; and artewards thee wark'st out in a decent comely fashion. Wark this out naw; 'tis naught but a sum. To-day be Monday, the last day of August. Say what the man be doing at this very moment, could we speak with him, and then follow thy seet just day by day dairn an' dusk reet on tu this same happening. 'Tis naw gude to swallow the howl an' gie us it plump jist like a hasty puddin', for then for sure us gets more lies than trewth. Wheer is this man? Now use yer wits, gal, an' see straight."

Ann fidgetted. "Thee strains me hard, Meg Doon, an' sometimes 'tis tu difficult to follow the seet—it gaws an' leave me nawthin' but supposin's, an' then I fails 'ee."

"Thee'll not fail me this time, cheeld," returned Meg. "See straight. Naw wheer belongs the man to be?"

For the third time Ann paused, while her listeners waited painfully.

"I see," she said at last. "He be in a big house, far away from heer by road. He be settin' in a corner av a white room an' readin' wards aloud from a book."

"Do 'ee belong to be reading the wards to any wan?"

"He be readin' to a young gal with a white face an' dark hair. She be wearin' a white dress. The room be full of light."

"Keep thy seet on him then; naw watch him through the time. Watch him as thee seest a figure passin' in a glass. See heer, sevin days—the fingers av wan hand an' av a finger an' a thumb—wan week. How many times will 'ee have counted day an' neet upon they fingers before he will be back at Tremellon for tu claim his wife?"

For the third time that afternoon the clock ticked in a silence broken only by that monotone, and Ann Hand's heavy breathing. Rose had slipped to the floor; shiver after shiver seized her body; her skin burned; she was seized with a strange fever.

Then the voice from the couch began to speak. The low rhythmical murmur grew into a song. "Six weeks," it said, then, "forty-two, forty-four, forty-six, forty-eight an' forty-nine. That makes seven. Seven weeks from the day he sits in the white room reading tu the white lady—which day be this day—forty-nine days maak seven weeks. Seven weeks then from this day I see the man at Tremellon."

"What do 'ee see?" Meg asked the question.

"I see a room—cliffs an' the sea du show beyont the open window—a deal o' furniture du belong to the room; the furniture be covered in some stuff that sheens; theer be big flures to it. Theer be a couch an' seelken cushions; theer be a side-board on wheech stan's seelver jugs an' flures; over the side-board be a picture——"

"Yes, yes," cried Rose, her voice had become toneless—"a picture!"

"A picture of a man an' maid, they stan' together. An' in the room itself I see——"

"God! God!" The kneeling girl could restrain herself no longer. She swayed backwards and forwards breathing hard. "What—do—you see?"

"I see a man an' a wumman. It be you that I du see, but you be dressed in rose color, different to naw, you an' the man. You be standin' like the pictur'—he wi' his arms around 'ee an' your head upon his shoulder. He speaks to 'ee—two wards——" the voice stopped.

"Yes, yes?"

"I cannot weel hear what they du be."

"You *shall* hear." The gentle Rose was living beyond herself; she seemed to have caught Meg Doon's spirit. "You—*shall* hear. What are his words?"

"'My wife,' these be his wards."

Rose fell upon the ground against the couch. It was as though the heavens had blessed her with outstretched hands. She wanted nothing more. She rested in a blissful assurance, that the future would bring her to a new life. For three nights she had scarcely slept; for three days her unquiet soul had worn her to a shadow. Now all was peace. No one spoke in the little room. She lay quietly, her head upon her arm, and by degrees her weariness overmastered her and she closed her eyes.

The day drew in; the copper sunset changed into a leaden night; the wind rose and wailed about the little dwelling and Rose slept peacefully upon the floor. There was scarcely any light now, for the fire had burned low and the three cats still lay stretched before it upon the hearthrug. Only Meg Doon waked and sat staring at the sleeping figures.

"Dreams!" she muttered. "We be but dreams an' closed in on all sides by ither dreams."

She let her eyes rest for a moment upon the idiot whose arm was stretched across her face, and then they dropped to Rose, soft with youth, dewy with happiness; a flush had risen to the girl's cheeks—they were rose color, swept by golden eyelashes—her face as it emerged from shadow was circled by

the golden aureole of her hair. The old woman laughed a bitter laugh as she looked at her.

"Jest sich anither! Jest sich anither!" she muttered. "An' naw!"—she lifted her yellow wrinkled hand and peered at the lines, holding it close against her eyes. Then she let it drop. "Fude fur the grave," she said, "and tough at that! What did un say—he'd drink her sawl an' fleeng away the cup. Ay, ay, 'tis ever saw. 'Tis the fate o' wummin tu be fleenged away, an' the fairest be fleenged the farst. As it was in the begeening, warld without end." Her voice died down. When it rose again it held a thrill of passion. "I wasn't laike the rest. Fleenged I wuz, but I hit agin' the fleenger an' I braked un even as I braked myself." Her gaze returned to Rose. "Ess fay!" she exclaimed. "Saft cheeks, saft breast, saft body, saft heart to be bruised by a man's fingers, saft sawl to be wiped out o' the sight o' God by a whimsy thumb! Ah!" her passion rose in her throat, "an' I waz safter wance, safter, fairer an' more to be desired than she; sweet wuz I tu a man's eye, sweet wi' a tarrible sweetness. Ah, God damn you, John Trewarra, you belong tu be dead in my heart by this time, a clay, cold corsp you be, but the sight o' a fair wumman have raised the poor old ghost of 'ee. God damn you tu the end o' time, sez I, Meg Doon, an' ef the dead can heer the voice of the leeving, you'll heer my voice, John, wheerever you may bide, even as you've heard it many times these fifty years."

An hour passed and still Meg Doon crouched in her corner. The wind had fallen; heavy drops of rain thudded against the glass. "Here be the starm," muttered the old woman as she rose to her feet and shuffled across the room, "it's bin about the place thes blessed day." As she opened the cottage door a sudden wet gust drove her backwards towards the fireplace. Rose stirred in her sleep, shifted her position and then sat up.

"How long have I been here?" she said quickly, pushing the overshadowing hair out of her eyes. "What has happened?"

"Nothing be happened, cheeld. Theer, theer, come yu tu 'ee's senses." Meg helped the girl to her feet and sat her on a chair.

The events of the afternoon came back to Rose gradually as the remembrance of a dream that had ended well, only it left, instead of a dim regret, a turbulent presage of the future; the wave of excitement that had receded now swept onward; she could not control her thoughts; her head reeled. For the first time she realized that she was feeling physically ill; she shivered but her skin burned; she did not know what was the matter with her. "I must go home," she said at last. She paid no attention to Meg, who in reply, pointed to the storm.

"I must go home, Mrs. Renowden will be expecting me."

"You may please yoursel' as tu that," replied Meg, taking umbrage at her decision, "but Tremellon is a goodish step from heer, an' it's a fair oogly night to be abraad."

Rose did not listen. The cottage had become full of ghosts for her; she only wanted to get away out of the hearing of Ann Hand's husky breaths. She borrowed a black cloak and a shawl, also a stick to help her on the road, for Meg, seeing that her mind was made up, ceased to persuade her to stay.

At the door Rose threw one glance backward; Ann Hand lay motionless; two of the cats still slept, while the third cleaned itself placidly upon the hearthrug. The whole interior photographed itself on the girl's mind with extraordinary precision—she felt that the picture would remain with her all her days.

"Good-night, Meg Doon," she said. "I will not forget to send you the money."

The old woman held the door open until she was out of sight; then she hobbled back to the kitchen and set about getting supper. "Want o' will spells wilful theer, I'm thinking." She fell back into her old habit of talking to herself. Ann Hand still slept.

Rose remembered the path by which she had come, but she found it difficult to walk now against the wind; her feet slipped upon the short grass. In the distance she could hear the roar of the sea. Should she lose the way, she thought that she could guide her footsteps by that sound. She passed some short bushes and a dip in the ground that she remembered; soon she would come to a low stone wall, and after that a

cart-track would take her to the road that ran above Tre-mellon. So she braced herself, but she did not realize very vividly, either her path or the consequences of a wrong turn. She had had no food since mid-day; fever burned in her bones and in her brain; the wind lashed her body, and the rain splashed upon her face. She struggled on with difficulty for about a mile, and then gradually doubt crept upon her. She had not reached the low stone wall that was her landmark; where was she? She did not know. Perhaps she had lost the way. Perhaps she was walking round and round in a circle. She did not know. She was wet through; water dripped from her skirt and oozed from her boots. Her body ached, and she longed to sit down and rest, but some instinct of self-preservation kept her moving. She hurried along, now running, now climbing slowly and with difficulty, now stopping, and with every minute, the fever that burned in her obtained a surer grip. Her brain grew cloudy; she re-enacted the events of the afternoon; once more she heard Ann's voice—the strange voice that had filled her with such terrors; once more she realized the meaning of the news it brought and once more her heart leapt wildly. Half delirious she broke out into a song—Isolde's love song. Note after note she flung it out upon the darkness and the wind carried the strange music to the sea.

At last the pains of her body mastered her; her feet were sore; her teeth chattered, her head ached horribly. She stopped singing and began to cry. "I am so tired," she repeated the words aloud, peering round her in the darkness. "I am so tired. I am so tired." Her voice came back to her from the night; it was as though another person had spoken the words; their sound frightened her; she felt very ill; she thought that she was going to die. A prayer rose to her lips, but the remembrance of the quest of the afternoon barred its utterance, for to her untrained mind, that visit to Meg's cottage had ranged her now inexorably upon the side of evil.

"I must not pray now," she said. "I am too wicked." And then in contradiction to herself, the human instinct asserted itself and all her pain broke forth in supplication to the Un-

Chapter Seven

"All I believed is true!
I am able, yet,
All I want, to get
By a method as strange as new,
Dare I trust the same to you?"
BROWNING

RUTH! Ruth!" Mrs. Whitter's voice came from the end of the corridor. She had just emerged rejuvenated from the hands of a clever maid, and her appearance was even more than adequate to the occasion. She called again. "Ruth, if you don't wait for me, I shall have apoplexy. I can't hurry. Remember I am not so young as I used to be."

Ruth stood still and laughed. "I believe you say that to disarm criticism. You look nineteen."

"Then I look your age, my dear." Mrs. Whitter slipped her hand into the girl's arm, "and you look more than your age—a great deal more—but what does that matter at nineteen? Nothing matters."

"I *am* more than my age," replied Ruth, "a great deal more. I cannot help it; it comes from being an only child."

"It comes from thinking too much," said Mrs. Whitter, tapping Ruth's hand with her fan. "Thoughts at your age are more wearing than emotions."

They had reached the head of the staircase. Below them in a hall paneled with old brocade, and so furnished that draughts had become eliminated, stood Elizabeth awaiting the arrival of a distinguished guest whose presence for one night at Templeton had caused something of a flutter to run through the household. The flutter is a movement essentially human. The tradesman flutters to the baronet, the baronet to the duke, and in this case it was a duchess who had roused the humanity of Sir Raymond. Mrs. Whitter always declared that

it was just those little human touches in Sir Raymond that endeared him to the hearts of his admirers. He was in fact,

"A creature not too bright and good
For human nature's daily food."

So it was the dignified bosom that was the first to be stirred. From Sir Raymond, emotion swept to the lower regions where Monsieur Papillon, the chef, lived, in a whirlwind. It had passed over Elizabeth, however. She was unruffled! She ordered that certain rooms should be prepared for the Duchess of Kidderminster, and she lingered perhaps a moment longer than usual over the menu for the day, supplied to her by M. Papillon. Then she forgot all about it.

Ruth walked up to her mother and put her hand in hers. She bent forward and said something and laughed. Elizabeth laughed too, and laid a finger caressingly upon her cheek. The men of the party—a small one—were already assembled, and Sir Raymond tapped an impatient foot in the background, turning his eyeglass now upon the staircase, and now upon Vivian Vissian, an artist—a youth of genius and of eccentricity, who had been in the house for some few days, and who now balanced himself upon a low divan, sitting cross-legged like a Turk, but with superhuman skill tucking in the points of both toes. His attitude annoyed Sir Raymond, in a manner and to a degree that even he—if called to judge the emotion in another—would have found disproportionate to the offense. Two other men present stood silent; they had nothing to say to each other; Mrs. Whitter had not sought their society and Elizabeth appeared to be for the moment absorbed in her daughter. So each of these two stood watching the couple in front of him, occupied with his own thoughts. To the observer, skilled to read the truth under an acquired immobility of countenance, it would have been apparent that the presence of Ruth was now a matter of moment to Hugh Templeton, as well as to Robert Trelling. So much was declared by a studied negligence of manner covering a concentration that had become supreme.

The move to dinner was made upon the arrival of the

Duchess, who sailed into the dining room upon Sir Raymond's arm, twinkling, and rustling, "terrible as an army with banners." Mrs. Whitter followed with Hugh Templeton and Vivian Vissian was obliged to uncurl himself and offer his arm to Ruth.

Templeton, finding the Duchess seated upon his left, implored Ruth's commiseration in a quick glance across the table, but Ruth drooped her eyes, for of late she had found her cousin a somewhat disturbing neighbor. Templeton therefore having telegraphed his disappointment unmistakably, proceeded to devote himself to Mrs. Whitter. Sir Raymond's shoulders were becomingly bent to catch the Duchess's opinions, and so Templeton settled himself down comfortably to the sort of conversation that Mrs. Whitter enjoyed.

"I shall be a dull companion to-night," he said, with a side look at the Duchess. "What can you expect of one with one foot in the grave, and," he smiled seraphically, "the other in—the gay."

"Is that foolish remark your own?" asked Mrs. Whitter.

"No, it's a poor thing but—someone else's. I cannot remember whose. Listen to the Duchess. She is dieting, she has refused soup and has just demanded hot water."

"I am so glad that I don't have to diet," said Mrs. Whitter lapping up the remainder of her soup with the air of a festive kitten; "as one gets older, one's amusements dwindle so. But there is always eating, thank God!"

Templeton grew mournful. "Do you know that I don't appreciate eating—appreciate it properly I mean—as an artist should. Isn't that a horrible thought? Sometimes I forget that I am eating, and often I don't know if it is bread or a stone—fish or a serpent that is being offered to me."

"You are in a bad state," replied Mrs. Whitter, now digging a spoon into the fish that was being handed to her, "a diabolical state! All good, simple souls are greedy; it is the result of health and of simplicity."

"You think that I am a lost soul," said Templeton, "because this fish for instance" (he in turn helped himself), "doesn't stir emotions in me?"

"I think that you are inhuman—a demon," replied Mrs. Whitter. "But I'm afraid you won't mind that."

Mrs. Whitter always amused Templeton. When her prattle bored him, he did not listen to it; it was a simple method and it served. He had recourse to it to-night; perpetually his thoughts reverted to a matter uppermost in his mind—Templeton Manor. He glanced round the great dining room, dark but for the lights upon the dinner table, which lit up the flowers and the gold plate; footmen moved silently in the semi-darkness under the famous portraits of ancestors and celebrities. Nothing Continental, however luxurious, could compare with the perfection of Templeton, and dinner time, apart from the efforts of Monsieur Papillon, was the best time to realize the refinement and the comfort of a well appointed English home. But from Templeton, his thoughts flew to Ruth opposite, and there was a good specimen if ever there was one, of the well appointed English girl. In her white muslin and simple fichu, Ruth reminded him of a Romney; she had the same long eyes and open brow. Oddly enough she also reminded him of something or someone else, but for the moment he could not think who it was. She had a trick of turning her head a little to one side and smiling. "There," thought Templeton, "she is doing it now! I have seen that look before—and lately! But, where have I seen it?"

He had no more time for speculation. Sir Raymond had set the Duchess free.

"I am sure that I have met you before, Mr. Templeton," she said graciously. "I know your face quite well. Now where could it have been?"

But Templeton could only smile his appreciation of the compliment. He could not answer the question, but the poise of his head—his whole figure betokened attention.

"Is not memory extraordinary?" continued the Duchess, absently. "One often forgets a name or an event, and yet one is perfectly conscious that it exists still in some far off corner of one's mind if one could only reach it."

"I was asking myself the same question a minute ago," replied Templeton. "I have not seen my cousin over there

since she was a little girl, and yet in some strange way I find that I know every line of her face, but not only her face, I know her gestures and her intonation. There is some memory in me, apart from the childish one, that I cannot reach or account for."

"Then we are in the same predicament," said the Duchess. "Perhaps Dr. Trelling can help us; that is *the* Dr. Trelling, the great mind doctor, over there, isn't it? I thought that it must be, because the name is an unusual one, and yet he looks so very young!"

"Yes, that is Robert Trelling," replied Templeton. "He has been a friend of my aunt's for a great many years. He is something over thirty. It is almost miraculous that he has reached the position he holds in so short a time."

The Duchess looked at Trelling intently. "I have not read his book," she said after a moment, "but I hear that it throws a new light upon our most commonplace ailments, and gives a scientific basis to all sorts of old wives' fables. Do let us consult him about our recalcitrant powers of recollection."

Templeton leaned forward. "Trelling," he said across the table, "where do our forgotten memories go to?"

The set of Trelling's face, as he looked up in answer to the challenge of the question, suggested obscurely a covert hostility. He had not caught the words. The question was repeated. "That's an ingenious phrase," he said after a moment's pause, "a forgotten memory is an exact description of something that is indescribable."

"Well, when it goes, where does it go to?" replied Templeton. "Her Grace has just remembered that she once had a memory that she has forgotten, and I have done the same thing. I have a memory of a memory that is lost, stolen, or strayed. Can you direct me to any lost property office of the mind where I may recover it? You have all answers to intelligent inquirers mentally tabulated and pigeon-holed, so please bring one forth and enlighten us."

Templeton's tone in speaking to Trelling changed; it held a contemptuous arrogance that was not lost upon the older man. But he parried the veiled attack with a joke, and

refused to take either Templeton or the Duchess seriously, until at last Sir Raymond, who felt perhaps in this matter a want of the reverence due to seignoralities, intervened with a heavy discharge.

"On any subject the serious opinion of a wise man is invaluable, Robert," he said pompously. "But in losing its seriousness, it loses half its wisdom."

Sir Raymond's diction had with advancing years grown more precise, his method a trifle pontifical. He knew himself to be an orator and, as it will be seen, modeled himself upon the Masters, but his powers of—let us say—compression were such that his ideas seldom extended beyond two sentences.

Trelling now found himself, as it were, between uncle and nephew—and annoyed with both. This was a position that he had occupied more than once during the past three weeks.

"I cannot give you an opinion on this subject, Sir Raymond," he said good humoredly. "If I did I should be obliged to lecture to you."

"On what subject?" asked Sir Raymond, with a touch of severity.

"On the subliminal consciousness, if I may be pardoned for a retreat into jargon."

"Is that the home of lost memories?" put in Elizabeth.

"Yes, Lady Templeton, that is where all lost memories, lost ideals, and lost affections continue to exist." In speaking to her, Trelling softened; his manner, sometimes brusque, became gentle and wonderfully sweet. "You see nothing is really lost, it is only packed away for a time—put by in lavender as it were."

"Between the sheets of the—'subliminal consciousness'!" exclaimed Templeton. "What a word! What an appalling idea! You conjure up a new vision of hell. I prefer Lethe, thank you. I cannot believe it. Pessimist as I am, I refuse to believe that I can be branded with perpetual memory."

"Just like Cain!" murmured Mrs. Whitter. "Poor, dear Cain!"

Trelling caught the phrase with a smile. "Yes, just like Cain; but just like Abel, too, for that matter. A man can't

lose the effects of his impressions any more than he can lose his personality. Your personality is in part the result of your impressions. Whether that exists perpetually is a matter of conjecture. Your impressions are your memories; you may forget them, but they are there all the time. You may forget yourself, you know," he added dryly.

Sir Raymond had now gathered up his thoughts sufficiently for a remark. "All this is exceedingly interesting," he said, looking round the table; "but I want to know how it can be proved!"

"The hypnotic schools of Nancy, and the Salpêtrière are proving it every day, Sir Raymond," replied Trelling. "The work of such men as Bramwell, Gurney, and Delboeuf, has settled that point beyond a doubt."

"Settled what?" asked Mrs. Whitter in a whisper, of Templeton.

"That each of us has a second consciousness—a second self that remembers everything. Hateful, isn't it? I find one self more than enough."

Mrs. Whitter's expression proved her concurrence; with a shrug she returned to her dinner.

Lady Templeton had overheard the remark. "A second self!" she said slowly. "Why? I have heard of hypnotism, of course, but what has a second self got to do with it? Do please explain, Robert, I want to understand."

Trelling despaired, but at the same time he laughed, for it was from Elizabeth that the request came. "It is very wrong of you to insist upon a lecture," he said, "for these things do not interest everybody, and I must use barbarous words. In the hypnotic state, the supraliminal self—that is the ordinary everyday self that we are all well acquainted with—is, as anyone can see, put to sleep; and when that is accomplished another personality is set free."

"Now how do you know that?" interpolated Sir Raymond; "I want to know how you prove that."

"Because this personality displays a different nature. It records. It obeys. It is entirely amenable to suggestion. It does not reason. In a normal condition it receives its orders

from the supraliminal consciousness, let us call it the conscious self for short, while in the hypnotic trances it takes them from the word of the hypnotizer. Also, it will answer questions on subjects concerning which the conscious self may be entirely ignorant."

"It is a most sentimental personality, too," said Templeton, still gloomily pondering the indestructibility of memory, "for apparently it never outgrows the impressions of its youth."

"It never outgrows anything," replied Trelling. "It has no youth or age, it never changes. As I said before, it records and it obeys. Every impression caught by the conscious self filters down below the level of consciousness into the subconscious. Nothing is lost. The forgotten memory that you spoke of——" he turned to the Duchess, "is true. If I were to hypnotize you now, I might be able to give it back to you."

The Duchess raised her eyebrows slightly. "Indeed."

Sir Raymond raised his more perceptibly, with an accent of disapproval, as though to exclaim at the thought of hypnotizing so august a personage. But Elizabeth, undisturbed by the remote indecorum, pursued the train of her thought.

"How strange to think that a personality can be split in two like that!" she said.

"In a normal condition, it is not split in two," returned Trelling. "It is one personality, but half is below the threshold of consciousness, that is all; when hypnotized it becomes two, and in some hysterics a dual personality sometimes shows itself without even the intervention of the hypnotizer. These people are often spoken of as mad or possessed."

"Possessed!" Lady Templeton echoed the words, and a new suggestion rose in her eyes. "That word makes me think of a letter that I received this morning from Monica Holden; you know who I mean, Duchess."

"I know Miss Holden very well, indeed," replied the Duchess. "I am associated with her in various kinds of work. She is indefatigable and never lets an opportunity slip. Also, she is wonderfully saintly, and a great organizer."

"Monica is having a holiday in Cornwall, and in rather a strange way she has come across a poor girl who, people say,

is possessed. This girl is imbecile, but when she sleeps, or, I suppose you would say," she added turned to Trelling, "falls into the hypnotic trance, she talks well and clearly, and can answer almost any question; besides, she becomes clairvoyant and professes to foretell the future."

Trelling nodded. "They often do. That is the peculiarity of a certain class of hysteric. The truth is that the subconscious mind differs in almost every respect from the conscious. The future in itself presents no difficulties to it. It seems to touch upon the confines of another world in which time is annihilated. The clairvoyant hypnotic may be right in every detail of the event that he describes, and yet unable to say if the event is past or yet to come. Also, he can scarcely ever fix a date correctly."

"All this that you are telling us is very wonderful," said the Duchess. "It would interest me intensely to follow it further. Can you tell me of any books that have been written upon the subject?"

"I will give you a list to-morrow morning," replied Trelling.

"I think it would be far more interesting to *see* something of the kind for one's self, than to read about it," added Sir Raymond. "When I was a boy, there used to be displays of mesmerism. I remember that there were two men who visited London and various provincial towns, giving public séances—absurd, vulgar performances at which people used to eat candles, or drink water thinking it was whisky and make nonsensical speeches."

"I think it is all perfectly horrid and dreadful," said Ruth suddenly, with a shudder. "That is what people called witchcraft in olden times. They were burned for dabbling in it. It ought not to be allowed." During the whole of the discussion she and Vivian Vissian had sat comparatively silent. Now she raised her voice in an emphatic protest.

"Never mind," said Vivian to her soothingly, "all this is only a phase. In a little while doctors will discover that the hypnotic trance is really due to a microbe, a dear little microbe. It won't be such a nasty boggy then, will it? When you dis-

like a doctor's theory, you have only to sit down and wait for another doctor to say it isn't true."

"Well, if there is anything to see," said Mrs. Whitter, "let us see it, for goodness sake! It sounds absolute nonsense to me—but then most scientific things do. When I see a star, it is waste of time to tell me that the light has traveled thousands of miles, and has taken months getting to me, for I simply don't believe it. I see the star in front of me, it's there, and there is an end of it. Can't we get hold of this girl?"

"I mean to," said Trelling.

"You mean to go all the way to Cornwall?"

Elizabeth spoke anxiously.

"It is worth going any distance to find a good hypnotic subject," replied Trelling. "Cornwall is not the world's end."

Sir Raymond glanced round the table; his eye was bright with a sudden inspiration.

"Would it not be much better to have the girl here," he said suavely; his tone implied that he had the agreement of the party. "We should treat her well and her people would, in all probability be only too glad to be rid of her. Then you could experiment as much as you like."

Elizabeth's anxiety grew. "Is this sort of experiment bad for the patient—in any way?" She turned quickly to Trelling.

"Not in the least, in moderation, and at the hands of a man who knows his work."

But Lady Templeton was unsatisfied. She disliked the idea, for she felt instinctively, with Ruth, that certain things are better let alone; and this strange science seemed to be one of them; it was uncanny, and, as yet, had served no good purpose; she distrusted and feared it. But she could see by the new animation in Trelling's face that he snatched greedily at the idea. That he intended to become acquainted with this girl she had no doubt, and Trelling's wishes in this as in everything, weighed greatly with her; she could not bear to disappoint him, or even to appear to disapprove, and in this manner both he and Sir Raymond apparently were agreed. If Trelling's opinion weighed with Elizabeth. Sir Raymond's word was law to her, and the further that law was removed from love, the

more strenuously did she obey it. Therefore, with so many motives pushing her into acquiescence, and accustomed always to stifle her own desires, bend her own will to that of another and mistrust her own judgment in anything that was not a matter of vital importance, Elizabeth silenced her qualms and fell into rank with the others, who, with the exception of Ruth, had no doubts at all about a matter so unimportant.

Then Sir Raymond's motive showed its bones. His suggestion had been conceived less in the interests of Trelling and of science, than for the social benefit of his fellow creatures. The Duchess was curious about this subject, and it was to the advantage of society that so admirable a man as Sir Raymond Templeton should be the friend and perhaps the advisor to one of its acknowledged leaders.

"We will leave the matter in other hands," he said magnificently. "Duchess, will you decide for us?"

"I am intensely interested in hypnotism," said the Duchess slowly, without committing herself. "It might be made a gigantic instrument for good, might it not? Fancy, if we could hypnotize criminals, and chronic invalids, into sane and healthy members of society! Surely the idea is worth considering!"

"You move too quickly, Duchess," said Trelling, laughing. "Although there has been a great deal talked and written upon the subject, and although it has worked undoubtedly in a great number of cases, there is in reality very little evidence to prove that post-suggestion is to be relied upon; hypnotized, the criminal will talk and act like an angel; wake him, and as he swims up into daylight, he will, I fear, be no more than himself."

Trelling spoke quickly and Elizabeth detected a certain nervousness in his words; he was peeling a peach and his hand shook. It was, she thought, due to excitement. The scientist in search of prey is very like a dog scenting the quarry. Trelling was a man now swayed by one desire—the desire for experiment. Elizabeth wondered if anyone had ever been so passionate in their desire for goodness—the desire that in her inspired every thought and every word.

"If I could be as passionate as that in pressing towards a greater goal," thought Elizabeth, "I should attain heaven." Then, with a sigh, she returned to the general conversation. Sir Raymond was speaking in his usual tone of positive assertion.

"We will have the girl here," he said, bringing his hand down emphatically upon the table. "She shall come to-morrow. Now, Duchess, we must—we will—persuade you to remain with us for a few days longer!"

The Duchess deliberated. "For a few days," she said hesitatingly—"perhaps. It will mean breaking a number of engagements, but—well, I feel that the thing is unique. It may be the experience of a lifetime. It may help me in—er—rescue work."

"It may! It may," agreed Sir Raymond strenuously. The pious lines about his mouth deepened, his eyes, as they met those of the Duchess, expressed his yearning to help the fallen. He nodded his head up and down.

Mrs. Whitter caught the expression, and was seized with an irresistible desire to laugh, also an irresistible desire for a companion to share her merriment.

"It *may*," said Sir Raymond for the last time, finishing his sentence and bringing his head to a standstill.

Under the table Mrs. Whitter caught Templeton a sharp kick on the ankle with the heel of her satin slipper. Templeton had also realized the humor of Sir Raymond, to the full, but it had never occurred to him to kick Mrs. Whitter. He laughed now, but his laughter sprang from a more complicated source than hers, and died out sooner. "How coarse Tom is growing," he said to himself finally, "she would not have done that five years ago."

"Do you know the girl's name, Elizabeth?" asked Sir Raymond.

"Ann Hand," replied Lady Templeton. "It is a curious name, isn't it? I believe she is very rough and uncouth, and I doubt very much if she would be persuaded to come here."

"Send your maid to fetch her, my dear. Lewis can see the relations and explain that she will be well paid for her time

and trouble." Sir Raymond's tone was conclusive. Elizabeth knew now that there was no more to be said.

"I think that I might be able to remain here until the twenty-fourth," said the Duchess. "Might I send for my secretary, Miss Banks, Lady Templeton? She knows all my engagements, and if she were here my last doubt would be removed. She could answer my letters and in that way I should not feel that I was neglecting any duty."

"My dear Duchess," struck in Sir Raymond, "nothing would give us greater pleasure! Send for Miss Banks by all means. Now, is not this a truly delightful ending to our discussion," he said gayly, looking round the table. "We are all both pleased and profited."

"And we are going to have a lovely spooky evening, with all sorts of queer things happening every minute," cried Mrs. Whitter, clapping her hands. "*Too* delicious! Simply ripping! Isn't it?"

"You are going to have nothing of the kind, if I am here to prevent it," said Trellick under his breath.

Only Elizabeth heard him, but she was grateful. Then she looked toward the Duchess and rose from the table.

During the conversation, dinner had progressed steadily, and silently, to the end. All the lights in the room except those upon the table had been switched off, and the Templeton grapes and nectarines stood illuminated in their gleaming dishes—still life, in a gold frame. A sudden silence had fallen upon the party; even Sir Raymond, for the moment, had grown pensive; Vivian Vissian, who had experienced a salutary discipline of enforced quiet, sniffed at the sprigs of verbenas and sweet gale that had floated upon the surface of his finger bowl, rendered more pungent by contact with the warm water that it contained.

At last her Grace arose ponderously, and after a few difficult steps, paused to address a remark to Mrs. Whitter, as that lady stood on one side to let her pass. The other women waited. Then down the long room swept the Duchess, weighed to earth by her heavy train, lifted to the stars by her glittering tiara—she was enormous. Pansy followed—a contrast, small

and insignificant, for size and diamonds always carry weight even in a less exalted sphere. Vivian Vissian left the dining-room with Ruth and her mother, for he objected to tobacco and preferred the company of ladies to that of men, and so, as usual, the two Templetons, uncle and nephew—alike and yet strangely different—were left alone with Robert Trelling.

Later the three men joined the ladies in the West Gallery that had led in the old days to Ruth's nursery. It was now brilliantly lighted, and the great wood fire sent up blue and orange flames, while through the long low windows trees showed gray against the moonbeams.

Ruth knelt in the window seat at the far end, looking down on the landscape; it seemed to have been drawn on moonlight with a finely pointed pencil. From her position she could see the river and the great poplars—all were gray and cold.

As the men came into the gallery, she turned her head slightly, and Robert Trelling, meeting her glance, moved forward impetuously. The movement was characteristic; he retained the spring and eagerness of a schoolboy. At the same moment, however, he became conscious that Templeton moved in the same direction, and, after a scarcely apparent instant of angry hesitation, he fell back. Ruth looked from him to the other man, who quite simply and unconsciously, as though it had been a place reserved for him, took the chair by her side. Trelling turned abruptly and walked across the room towards Mrs. Whitter.

Then Templeton let his lazy eyes rest full on the face at his side. The expression startled him. He found there surprise and disappointment. He looked again, for he could hardly believe the evidence of his senses. But he was not deceived. Ruth was disappointed and for the first time in his life, Hugh Templeton was eager. This in itself was a shock for it was the strongest impulse he had yet experienced. In a flash he analyzed it and found it composed of desire, admiration, doubt, and rage.

"By Jove!" thought Templeton. "By Jove, I would like to

wring your neck, my dear!" The sentiment is sufficient index to his state of mind, and easily intelligible. But could Ruth have heard it, she would have opened her innocent eyes a trifle wider as though to study the nature and habits of a strange beast that had, through some mischance, found its way into her quiet garden.

Chapter Eight

"Woman desires the infinite, man the finite. She is the continent of the infinite, making it conscious and powerful by limitation."

COVENTRY PATMORE

RUTH'S disappointment at the substitution of her cousin for Robert Trelling was not so simple an emotion as Templeton had imagined, and that fact, could he have known it, would have done much to allay a passion, that had, under artificial stimulation, grown up like a gourd in one night. The truth is that Ruth, while sharing her mother's affection for Robert, whom she had come to regard almost as a part of Templeton Manor itself, had of late grown strangely disquieted in the presence of her cousin. As a result she clung the more closely to Trelling, she found him a protection against Templeton, and against—herself, for now she had herself to reckon with as well, and this to Ruth was a new experience. Something in her, it seemed—a strange, unworthy, alarming *something*, hitherto unknown—was leagued with her cousin against all the quiet happiness that made up the sunshine of her life—her ideals of order and of joyful sacrifice, her ideals of beauty and of love, her entire frankness with herself and with the world, her absolute, loyal, unwavering devotion to her mother. All these things, it seemed, were shaken at their foundations. Why, she could not tell; she could not reason about it, but it was a fact impossible to repudiate. And yet, unwilling and fearful, she was drawn towards Templeton; his eyes held her; his will claimed her; his passion—for she felt it like an enveloping flood—dominated her; when she was with him, she touched a strange peace briefly, when she was away from him every hour that passed had become a pain. And yet—she was her mother's child and had been even in the midst of a closed garden prepared for battle: and it was the pain she sought now, rather than the peace. Hitherto, suffering and temptation had been mere words to her; her life had

passed her like a song—a song gentle and gay, that held, nevertheless, strange chords, perpetual, ominous, yet sweet, struck for her by the brooding love that, knowing all things, almost bewailed her innocence. Elizabeth's teaching never varied in its essence. It might have been summed up in the maxims applicable to women that occupied a separate part of Monica Holden's note book.

"The true attributes of woman are courage, wisdom, and fortitude; it needs courage to love, wisdom to guide, and fortitude to endure."

"Virtue is directed passion; a wise woman is her own director and a stern one."

"Reason is better than impulse, but the impulse that springs from the reasonable soul outstrips argument."

"A man, when his love is more than passion, loves with his head; a woman, when her thought touches a vital issue, thinks with her heart. 'Keep thy heart above all that thou guardest, for out of it are the issues of life.'"

And so it was that Ruth—at the first onslaught of these unknown forces, stood on guard, prepared for—she knew not what. It was absurd, she argued, to call love for her cousin—"temptation." A marriage with him, as Mrs. Whitter reiterated perpetually, was the thing that would most please her father. And yet she felt that everything in her that made for Heaven was ranged against it. Then there came a doubt. She was so ignorant. Was not the love of men and women always like that—a conflict? She had never loved before. Was not her maidenhood a bar to her understanding this aright? On this point she did not consult her mother. But she suffered, and her mother, knowing her unspoken thought, watched over her with a yearning that held in it something elemental and yet was more than the mere human desire of the mother towards her child.

The next day put her to the test. Trelling had gone down to Cornwall to assist in bringing back the girl, Ann Hand. Elizabeth had sent her maid with another servant, and the party had started off in the early morning before Templeton Manor was awake. In all probability they would return before

the evening of the following day. Ruth gathered this news at breakfast in spite of the perpetual conversation of Vivian Vissian. She captured a sentence here and there during some longed-for but unexpected silence, when her neighbor paused to drink his coffee or to swallow a morsel of food. The Duchess breakfasted in her room, and Sir Raymond was free to wrap himself in gloomy dignity. Nobody talked much. Mrs. Whitter was considering her letters which she brought downstairs with her and placed in a pile at the side of her plate, and Elizabeth, usually smiling and interested in everything that interested her neighbors, seemed to-day to be struggling with some pre-occupation. Only Vivian was irrepressible. He called his conversation the art of *peruling*, and declared that his best stories were told in the *little language*. To-day he *peruled* nosily until Ruth turned to Templeton for a brief respite. Then Mrs. Whitter, the reliable, put a fork across her letters to keep them down, and like the gallant little woman she was, undertook Vivian. She found him scanning the table with an air of mingled surprise and concern.

"Where is the dear dockens?" he asked at length.

"Do you mean the Duchess or the doctor?" said Mrs. Whitter.

"I mean the dockens of course, not the dookess. It's vewy unkind of you, Aunt Tom, not to let me talk the little language."

Mrs. Whitter protested that he might talk any language in heaven or earth—big or little, and then explained what everybody else had known for at least ten minutes, the reason of Dr. Trelling's absence.

Vivian nodded. "Then I'll have some more brek-brek," he said cheerfully. "There are a lot of little smiling kidwinks on the sideboard. Vivian's much happier when dockens isn't here. He's such a monster!"

"A monster!" said Elizabeth, interrogatively. Vivian's conversation had ceased to alarm or amuse her. When she first met him, she had thought it bad taste on the part of his relations to invite an idiot to meet their friends. Then she had seen a picture of his at the New Gallery that was the work

of a genius, and had accepted him as he was; which indeed she was bound to do, for he would be accepted in this way or not at all.

"A monster!"

"It's like this," said Vivian, returning from the sideboard with a plateful of kidneys and bacon. "The dockens is so vewy, vewy cwoool. He has been keeping little typhoid microbes on sheets of gelatine for quite a long time—breedin' 'em, don't you know, like dogs. He invited me into his laboratory the other day, and I saw 'em like a flim upon the gelatine—poor little dears! Really, you know, they were all gamboling round or doing sums. Well, the dockens isn't fair to those poor little things—he's vewy cwoool considering he is opposed to vivisection. He keeps them there all day and all night, no difference in the twenty-four hours—shut up on their sheets of gelatine. Poor leetle typhoids! Of course they want to get out into the road and play with all the uvver leetle typhoids—nasty, horrid, cwoool dockens."

During this recital Elizabeth's thoughts had wandered. "Ah," she said vaguely, when Vivian had finished. "I understand! Yes—very interesting!" Catching Ruth's eye she reddened slightly. "Now what are we all going to do to-day?" It was time, she thought, to change the conversation.

Sir Raymond grunted. "I have to go with Allen and see to a right of way through those lower fields by Radden's Corner."

"A right of way!" echoed Mrs. Whitter. "Why those fields don't go anywhere; they are skirted by the woods; there isn't a way."

"I know," said Sir Raymond gloomily, "but the Parish Council says that the village has a right to it whether it exists or not—so now I'm booked to trudge round Radden's Corner for the whole blessed morning, and try and find out what it is they do want. I can't make a way when there is no way, can I? Not even a labor member could do that."

The breakfast table sympathized; there was a respectful pause that threatened to prolong itself.

"And you, Ruth?" Elizabeth questioned, anxious rather to break the silence than to receive a reply.

"I am going to read to my cousin in the rock garden," said Templeton quickly; he had not spoken for nearly half an hour.

"Oh!" Color flooded the girl's face. "I am so sorry, but I cannot possibly sit in the garden this morning."

"Why?" It was Templeton's persistence that leveled stone walls, and he was prepared to walk endlessly round this city. "You told me yesterday that you had no engagements."

"I must take some flowers to the church directly after breakfast. I have to arrange the altar vases."

"And afterwards? If you were arranging a Harvest Festival it wouldn't take you until lunch time. I have written a poem on Rimini—it brings in the Paolo and Francesca incident. I want your opinion."

"Paul and Frances!" exclaimed Vivian. "Oh, how old-fashioned!"

"Will you come?"

"Of course she will, Hugh!" Sir Raymond arched his brows over a gathering storm. "Altar vases—fiddle! In church until luncheon—I won't allow it! It's bad for morals. Modern religion is introspective and hysterical. Women are introspective and hysterical. Modern religion makes them more so. No, no, no! You go down to the rock garden with your cousin and improve your mind."

"On Paul and Frances." Vivian spoke under his breath and nobody heard him. Sir Raymond had plunged once more into the detail of the right of way.

Ruth cut her flowers mechanically. For the time being she had lost all interest in outside things. Insistent in her consciousness was the thought that within less than two hours she would be with Templeton. A crisis was imminent, that she knew by instinct. She might prove too weak to grapple with the force that held her. The thought frightened her, and yet it brought with it a deadly sweetness. To be weak—quite weak—to let go her hold on the ideal she clutched at with such tenacity—to sink without a struggle into the arms of the man who dominated her and whom, perhaps, she loved—if, indeed it were love that she felt for Templeton! She paused—fright-

ened. She was, it seemed, upon the brink of a precipice. She shuddered and drew back, ashamed to look into the depths of her own heart. Knowing that she gave no harborage to the thought, the knowledge saved her self-respect, but that it should have come to her at all was a proof to her mind of some innate horrible weakness. The recoil was so violent that it threw her once more inexorably upon the side of her ideal. She stood still for a moment and drew a deep breath. She was strong again. Her sense of the beauty of the material world revived, once more she realized herself and her surroundings—the scent of the white phlox in her hands, the breeze that blew in her face, the pigeons that fluttered about her hoping for grain—it was a blessed and a gay world after all! The thought that she had put away from her was no more than a nightmare.

This happy temper lasted, and Templeton, when he came to claim possession of her, found it a more disconcerting mood than usual. She was sisterly; her judgment was dispassionate; and in addition to this she sewed steadily at a piece of embroidery for every moment that he read.

For half an hour he hammered passionate verse into the ears of a dutiful and exceedingly critical young woman. Then he stopped.

"It's no use! The truth is, you don't like my poor Francesca!"

"I am sorry for her. I cannot justify her."

"Great love is its own justification." Here, but for the needlework Templeton could with effect have used his eyes.

"I have been taught that great love could sacrifice its life for the loved one; instead of that, it seems, it would sacrifice the loved one to its own selfishness."

Templeton laughed at her; she was a delightful prig. Her face was set firmly; her little mouth was tightened at the corners; from the magnificent height of her inexperience her eyes, raised for one moment, reprimanded him. He was entirely in love with her. In imagination he installed her lady of Templeton.

"But you know it isn't quite like that—well, is it? You are very severe," he pleaded, laughing.

"Am I? But isn't love severe? Doesn't it demand the very best in itself and in the loved person? Of course I am very sorry for Francesca—in the way I might be sorry for a—criminal." Purposely she exaggerated: his laugh had annoyed her.

"A criminal! Good God!" Templeton's amusement changed to sudden anger. He leaned forward until he nearly touched her. "You strange woman! What are you made of? And yet, you look as though you might be able to love—you do indeed." The words hit her, but she took them unflinchingly. "Tell me—can you fancy nothing of the marvel—the enchantment of a great passion?"

Ruth reddened intolerably. Nobody had ever before asked her such a question. Then she gathered herself together.

"I can feel nothing about such a passion as you describe in your poem, except its unworthiness. When you use beautiful words about it, you make me think of a scarecrow wrapped in cloth of gold."

"But what of the women who have lost the world for love, Helen, Guinevere, the great women of poetry and drama? Do you think them——"

"Piteous," she interrupted, "as beautiful creatures—mutilated." Her words gave her courage. "Hugh," she said after a moment, "you know my mother very well."

"Yes."

"Could her youth have been the youth of your Francesca? Think of her now and answer. And was there no passion, no marvel, no enchantment in her life when she was young? Her youth was full of passion, I tell you, but the passion of prayer was greater than any other, and the marvel and enchantment lay in the vision of God that she found always in her own soul. Do you suppose that if she had become absorbed in a love that was merely selfish, that she would be what she is now? How can you expect me to admire the love you have been reading to me about, when I have a life like this in front of me, that is more poetical than all the poetry that was ever

written, and more beautiful than any beauty ever dreamed of—because it is touched with the beauty of holiness itself. When you tell me of this love, I think of my mother, and this love compared to hers—for love is the inspiration of her life—seems to be like a little rush-light before the sun.”

She paused breathless, and then, as though ashamed of her vehemence, caught up her work and stitched; but she had said all she wanted to say in those last sentences; they explained her attitude towards life, they set forth unmistakably the things she strove for, the things that belonged to her peace.

Templeton was baffled. There was nothing he could reply to such an outburst, and clearly it would be impossible for him to continue reading verse written from so different a point of view. Excusing himself therefore, on a palpable pretext—important letters required his immediate attention—he left her to solitude and the garden. She bent over her sewing; her cheeks were flushed; her mouth compressed; a tear ran down her face. Her cousin walked slowly towards the house. Once more anger held him, and each gust of rage increased his passion. “Absurd little puritan!” he exclaimed mentally. “If I know anything about women she shall grovel to me before I have done with her!”

Mechanically he slipped his MS. into his pocket. It lay face to face with an unopened letter that bore a Cornish postmark—a letter that seemed to Templeton to arrive perpetually, bringing with it always unutterable boredom, reinforced by an uncomfortable yet impotent sense of obligation to do something drastic and end the annoyance. This change in Templeton had in reality come about gradually, but to him it seemed that it had happened in a flash, from the moment, indeed, when he had first set eyes on Ruth and realized his destiny—and his duty—as the heir of Templeton. When desire rests upon a sense of duty such as this, its gratification becomes a matter of moral import. Templeton therefore determined, should Ruth remain obdurate, to enlist Sir Raymond on his behalf.

He carried out his project that same evening after dinner. It was a good opportunity; Trelling was away and he had Sir Raymond to himself. He came at once to the point, explain-

ing the situation with admirable directness. Sir Raymond was delighted: there was nothing he desired more. Before leaving the dining-room the two men shook hands.

That evening Templeton avoided Ruth, ostentatiously devoting himself to Mrs. Whitter. The girl had it borne in upon her that she had attained her end; from henceforward it would not be necessary to defend herself against her importunate wooer. She would be left alone to face the untroubled days that had hitherto been so full and varied. She lay awake half the night considering this moral victory she had gained. She wished that she had never been born, and then she cried herself to sleep.

Thus was the ground prepared and the seed sown that would be reaped with such amazing swiftness.

Sir Raymond was good-humoredly tolerant of his daughter's apathy, when next day he begged of her a private interview in which to urge the suit of Hugh Templeton. She obeyed the command that had masqueraded as a request, and came with dragging footsteps. Sir Raymond lifted her chin with a parental forefinger.

"The minx! She knows her own value, eh?"

Ruth was silent. Before she was ten years old she had, when dealing with her father, learned the futility of explanation. Sir Raymond was delighted with her. Pride, reticence and decorum were the qualities he most prized in the women of his own family, and elsewhere, most detested. These were the qualities he would have looked for in choosing a bride—safe, trustworthy qualities from which a peaceful future might be predicted. "Beware of a woman of temperament," said Sir Raymond in giving advice to a young man about to marry. "And beware of a woman of self-control—for that implies the existence of something to be controlled. Seek ice rather than fire. It is always safe to begin with a little frigidity and trust to the mediation of that exuberant Dame Nature to prevent it from hampering in any way the natural emotions, which—guided into the right channel of wifely devotion—are altogether excellent and admirable."

To-day after a discussion of marriage in general from the other side—the point of view of the prospective matron,—Sir Raymond went on to expatiate upon the blessing of a happy and a virtuous home. Then he instanced a marriage between Ruth and Hugh Templeton, as an example of all that the perfect union might be. He did this skillfully, showing the advantages that such an alliance would bring to Ruth and—to her parents. He dwelt on the happiness of seeing his dear daughter married, and on the comfort with which he could look forward to the many improvements he intended making on the Templeton estate, sure at last that it would not pass away from his descendants. So much did he say, and so well did he say it, that he produced in Ruth a whirl of agonizing indecision, precisely as he had intended doing. He lifted her chin once more, dropped a kiss like a butterfly upon her forehead, and with his usual mincing tread, tip-toed from the room.

Ruth's first impulse was to rush to her mother, tell her everything and act implicitly upon her advice. Then she paused, for she knew quite well what Lady Templeton's advice would be. Elizabeth did not like Hugh Templeton, and she did like Robert Trelling. Ruth was not quite sure if, after all, she wanted her mother to tell her what to do; she was harassed and worried beyond endurance, but, perhaps, it would be better if she settled this matter for herself. Still, she could go and talk it over with Lady Templeton. She would go at once. Again she hesitated; her feet it seemed refused to obey her orders, and when she finally made a move it had become too late.

Templeton stood in the doorway. Sir Raymond had, in the approved old-fashioned style that he delighted to affect, sent him to the library in search of Ruth.

He wasted no time to-day. He had not come to discuss the merits of Francesca. The period of service was over, the period of lordship was begun. He came forward quickly and took her in his arms: his touch was the touch of an expert in such matters.

Ruth did not resist him.

Chapter Nine

"It is commonly said that love is a passion to which man is always liable, and which may surprise him at any moment of his life from fifteen to seventy-five. . . . There is at first, as in every virulent malady, a period of incubation: the new idea passes and repasses in the vague reveries of the enfeebled consciousness, then seems for a few days to have disappeared and to leave the mind to recover from its passing trouble. But the idea has done its work below the surface: it has become strong enough to shake the body: and to provoke movements whose origin lies outside the primary consciousness."—Janet, *L'Automatisme Psychologique*.

"L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle."

DANTE—*Paradiso*

THE thought of Ruth's engagement to her cousin pressed painfully upon Elizabeth. Was this then the end of all her plans? Was she at this last moment to lose her daughter? Already Ruth was slipping from her into the depths of what seemed to be an unworthy infatuation for an unworthy object, while Sir Raymond rubbed complacent palms and Mrs. Whitter watched events and smiled.

In her solicitude for Ruth, Elizabeth would have consulted even Trelling, deeply implicated as he was in her designs for her daughter, only that Trelling, who had just returned with his patient, Ann Hand, seemed to have no thought beyond the importance of his experiments.

Sir Raymond had broken the news of Ruth's engagement to him on his arrival, and beyond a sudden knitting together of his long, loose limbs, and a sudden angry lighting of his blue eyes, he gave no sign that the information had in any way affected him, except, perhaps, by a momentary legitimate surprise. Elizabeth searched his face from time to time, looking in vain for the distress she had predicted, but she could find only a grim eagerness that grew almost to passion where work was concerned. This hurt her. It was more than a mere dis-

appointment to find that at such a moment he could think only of further means to establish theories on which his reputation was already built; yet, as often as she led the conversation round to Ruth and Ruth's engagement, he, neglecting the message in her eyes, evaded her, bestowing an almost cynical minuteness of exposition on the other matter so alien to her thought.

The truth was that Sir Raymond's jaunty news had hit Robert Trelling hard, and, being an Englishman, his first impulse was toward rage rather than sorrow, work rather than regret. Thus it happened that the various phases of Ann Hand's distemper were watched by this observer with more than even a scientist's concentration. The girl was established at the lodge under the care of an old family servant. At the end of a fortnight, Trelling hoped to have obtained sufficient record of the abnormal symptoms to make it worth while to send her to the establishment of a famous hypnotist in Paris; but at present there was little to record.

Elizabeth knew that these things were to Trelling of vital interest. He had pursued his researches in the teeth of the most adverse criticism, the whole force of medical opinion—the most rigid and uncompromising consensus in the world—had been against him, and yet by dint of an instinct in diagnosis that was almost infallible, and by a power of bringing all the forces of the human frame, mental as well as physical, to the aid of the patient, he had achieved his present position. His entire progress had been that of a revolutionist, but a revolutionist who attacked existing methods from the inside, and attacked them with the skill of an expert. His first success was a book on Bacteriology, which was followed by a series of articles in a great review. These he afterwards elaborated into an exhaustive treatise in which he continued to set forth his earlier discoveries, but went behind them as it were with a theory that certain mental states created the atmosphere which determined whether the germ should multiply or be killed outright. He illustrated this theory by means of his own experiments and by examples drawn not only from the hospital, which does not concern itself with the mental

state of the patient, but from the records of the hypnotist and mental healer also, who do not concern themselves with the existence of the germ.

In the mind, according to Dr. Trelling, lay the cause and the cure of a great part of the diseases that touch mankind. The medical world scoffed, but a new and scientific faith, so reasoned that it became indeed the "substance of things hoped for," worked him cures; and indeed it had so far justified his views that his opinion became gradually one of the few that really mattered to the younger men of all shades of thought. Still, with all his knowledge, Trelling had not attained to the skill of the witch of Penolver. His methods were as scientific, but less efficacious, than those of Meg Doon, and the most he had yet got from Ann was a few disjointed words and broken sentences. The transplantation from Tremellon to Templeton had upset the girl, and for a few days it seemed as though her second personality had slipped away into some dim underworld from which no voice, however potent, could recall it. The Duchess had waited impatiently and had seen nothing. Her secretary had followed her about that day with obvious apologies, as though the blame rested somehow upon her narrow shoulders. Sir Raymond was manifestly annoyed. Elizabeth was puzzled, Ruth relieved, and Mrs. Whitter and Hugh Templeton amused. The only person entirely unperturbed was Trelling himself, and he was too much absorbed in the various aspects, which even in this early stage the case presented to him, to pay very much heed even to the disappointment of a duchess. At last that august visitor bade Templeton Manor farewell and drove away, followed by the lamentations of Sir Raymond.

Ann Hand's life at Templeton was a happy one; she wandered among the autumn flowers, crocheted, drew pictures on a slate, and every morning she was thrown into the hypnotic sleep which, as time went on, became deeper and more sure. She was being educated gradually to her new surroundings.

The day after the Duchess had taken her departure, Trelling stood in the hall at Templeton preparing to set out for his usual morning interview. Through the open window he caught

a glimpse of Ruth and her lover going off to the woods to pick flowers. Ruth's doubts had evidently been put to rest; the glow of perfect happiness shone in her face and as he looked at her, it seemed to Trelling to be an outrage that she should mate with so flimsy a creature as her cousin. "Sounding brass!" he said to himself. "Brass is a good word—a tinkling cymbal! I can hear the little jingle of his phrases!"

He strode in the direction of the shrubbery to his work. The beauty of summer had not yet fled, although the leaves were turning; clumps of agapanthus shone like blue stars in the luscious greenery; scarlet gladioli shot up flaming rockets. All the world rejoiced even within the shadow of winter, and Trelling, looking upon its beauty, felt his own unhappiness seethe and bubble within him like a fever.

"My God! A doctor who could cure this distemper would earn the blessings of his species. Love! What's the use of analyzing the thing; it is a mental disease and a painful one!" His train of thought was broken by the barking of a dog, and, turning, he saw Elizabeth behind him, followed by Bess and the skye terrier. She wore a large Leghorn sun hat tied with ribbons underneath her chin, and looked scarcely older than her own daughter. Without speaking, Trelling walked towards her and took his place at her side. Suddenly Elizabeth put out her hand and touched his arm.

"What is it, Robert?" she said quickly. "There is something! Tell me!"

Trelling covered her hand with his. "I've been crossed in love, dear friend," he said; "that is all."

The confession had come. Elizabeth was thankful that the silence between them had at last been broken.

"Ruth——" she felt her way.

"Yes, Ruth. I did not know how much I cared——" He paused, then with a little hard laugh he added—"how far the disease had gone. It has struck pretty deeply, but it has to be burned out now and cured."

Elizabeth flinched at his tone.

"You will only hurt yourself and her, if you try to cure it in that way," she said quietly, after a moment's silence.

Trelling let go of her hand, but she did not take it from his arm, so once more his fingers closed upon it, and although it was not the hand of the woman he loved, it seemed to him that waves of peace flowed through him.

"What other way is there? How can you cure a useless passion except by eradicating it?"

"No," her tone was positive; "not eradicating—changing it." She paused as the thought shaped itself in her mind. "Life works through change—it is never idle. It can turn a disease into health," she went on; "it can make ugliness beauty." Again she paused and her touch was still on his hand. Then she spoke with a new emphasis—as one speaks who brings into counsel a confession of experience. "It is not less love that is wanted in the world, my dear, but more—a great deal more. Robert, I do understand. I do, indeed. It seems to you that it is very easy for me to talk, but——"

He stopped her. "No," he said, "it isn't easy to talk as you do. You speak out of what you know. Every word counts. I think," he hesitated, "you have learned how to love—under difficulties." Then he went on quickly, as if his gratitude knew best how to show itself by avoiding any further recognition of what she half disclosed. "You see, all this is a new experience to me. Beyond a few trifling disappointments, I have never had any real trouble to contend with, and when I don't get my way, I writhe and wriggle like a butterfly twisting on a pin. Don't let us talk about it any more."

"But I must," she insisted. "You cannot imagine what a bitter disappointment this has been to me. At first I didn't believe it could happen—it seemed impossible; but now——"

"Now," he said grimly, "it stares one in the face. How radiant she is!"

"Does it hurt you to see her radiant?" said Elizabeth.

"Yes," he answered. "It hurts like fire."

She pressed his hand without speaking.

"Robert," she said at last, "it is hardly worse for you than for me. I had always hoped that you would be a son to me. It is not the pain of disappointment that I fear, for her it is—

I cannot tell you. But if you love her really, the pain you will feel will not be your own pain."

"Dear Lady Templeton, you are very wise. It is you who are the true physician." He laughed and the bitterness had gone out of his laughter. "Let me put it to you in my own jargon—a case as it presents itself to me. You have gone to work with me on the most approved principles, although you do not know it. You have given me what is called a 'counter suggestion.' I suggested to myself, love—a disease, and I felt the tortures of a fire. You suggest love that is health and sanity, and in talking to you I still feel the pain of my disappointment, but the sting, for the moment at least, has passed away. You won't deny me the comfort of anatomizing my own psychology, for you see your suggestion has gone home."

"Filtered down to the subliminal consciousness!" said Elizabeth, and she, too, laughed more happily. "Have I remembered?"

Still talking, they had reached the lodge gate. Trelling waited outside to bid her good-by.

"There is another anodyne," he said; "with all my borrowed philosophy, I shall not be sorry to get away from my feelings to my business."

Elizabeth stood for a moment scanning him. The tie of sympathy that had bound them so closely, held her. "May I come in?" she said on a sudden impulse.

For one moment Trelling hesitated: the pause was scarcely perceptible: then he made up his mind.

"Yes," he said, "you may, but you must sit very still: the patient is easily excited."

A movement that was half laughter curved Elizabeth's lips, but behind it there was a sigh that showed as a shadow in her blue eyes. The hour had been hers. Now she knew that, once past that door, Robert Trelling would become another creature—hopes, aspirations, even love would for the time being drop before the master passion of the scientific mind, the desire for experiment. There would be only one woman for Robert Trelling in that cottage—the hysteric Ann Hand.

Mrs. Martin, the lodge keeper, dropped a courtesy as they passed in, but Elizabeth, her eyes full of the glare of sunlight, looked about her dazzled. A dim figure standing by the fireplace grew gradually distinct.

"Ruth," cried Lady Templeton, in surprise, "what are you doing here?"

The girl stood by the hearth languidly leaning one arm against the mantelpiece.

"I came down to ask Robert if I might stay for a little," she replied coolly. "I want to see some of his experiments. May I stay, Robert?"

A presence so unexpected checked the trend of Trelling's thought, and flung it rapidly backwards to the commencement of his morning's walk.

"Surely," he began—his voice indicated an astonishment greater even than Lady Templeton's, "surely I saw you on the terrace not twenty minutes ago——"

"With Hugh. Yes, we were going for a walk, and papa overtook us, for he wanted Hugh to go down to the woods with him to give him an opinion about that right of way. May I stay, Robert? Please say yes!"

Trelling hesitated for the second time: two distinct and opposite inclinations swayed him. He wished always for Ruth to be near him, but at this moment he desired any presence rather than hers. He longed to be free, to grapple with his own pain and to fling himself into this strange study that he had made his own. He was almost rough in his reply.

"I don't like visitors," he said shortly.

"But mother and I are not visitors," insisted Ruth, "and Ann has been here for nearly ten days. She ought to have got used to us by now."

"She is quite used to us, aren't you, Ann?" said Lady Templeton, as she bent over the girl's chair.

The sense of her words seemed to penetrate into the fogged brain; with a quick contortion, the girl lifted her head; the lips twitched, giving out an abortive sentence. Elizabeth shrank back.

"You had better not stay," said Trelling quietly.

"Oh, but I want to!"

"Well, don't talk to her. She can't reply intelligibly."

"She can, indeed, sir," Mrs. Martin intervened. "She can talk proper when she's quiet. She is a dear child, and that sensible. She was telling me all about Cornwall this morning and the flowers and the rocks and the pretty shells she picks up on the beach. Weren't you, Ann?"

One side of the idiot's face twitched again—she nodded her head and made inarticulate noises of assent.

Trelling opened a door which led into a small inner room reserved for Ann's use. Two cane-bottomed chairs stood by the fireplace, and a large cretonne-covered couch occupied one side of the room; a picture of Queen Victoria hung over the mantelpiece, and below it photographs of most of Mrs. Martin's relations; some wax flowers, under a glass shade, stood on the table. The room was cheerful and commonplace; in such an atmosphere the occult lost its mystery. All the bright Christian members of the Martin family, marshaled, as it were, by Her Majesty's portrait, seemed to protest against anything that was more than ordinary. The very sunlight did its best to prove that the corners held no bogies, and that nothing could exist where it did not shine. A proper belief in such easily understood things as heaven and hell was testified to cheerfully by a copy of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, that lay by the side of the wax flowers.

"Get up, Ann, and come in here," said Trelling.

The girl rose at once and did as she was told.

"Sit down on the couch."

"May we come in too?" asked Elizabeth.

"Not yet; you may come in a moment—that is if you insist on staying."

Lady Templeton wavered, but Ruth finally clinched the matter. "Of course we do," she said, "that is why we have come." She looked out of the window, tapping her foot impatiently. She wanted to see all that there was to be seen, but she was ashamed of her eagerness. However, of late, all her actions had seemed to contradict her theories; indeed, she had told Templeton only that morning that soon she would

be quite reconciled to thinking one thing and doing another. She thought of that phrase now, as she stood, countenancing by her presence what she had termed contemptuously, witchcraft.

When Trelling flung open the door, Ann Hand was lying asleep upon the sofa.

"How did you do it?" asked Ruth.

"Do you want a scientific explanation of my particular method of inducing hypnosis?" asked Trelling. Her defiant tone caught his humor and he laughed.

"Yes," she persisted, "I should like to know how it is done."

"Well, it is done in a great many ways. My method is very simple. This girl is an hysteric, and in common with numbers of others in the same condition, has certain patches on her body that are anæsthetic—that means that there is no sensation in them at all. Those patches used to be called 'witchmarks' by our ancestors."

"I am sure that they were, and a very good name for them," returned Ruth. "What do you call them now?"

"The hypnogenous zones," replied Trelling.

"Yes." Ruth nodded. "I was sure, too, that you would call them something like that; the other name was much better."

"They seem to form a nerve center that under stimulation produces hypnotism," Trelling went on—"I cannot tell you why or how. I can only say that when I press that spot here on the upper part of the arm, Ann Hand falls instantly into a state of trance."

"How extraordinary!" cried Elizabeth. "And how soundly she is sleeping. She does not hear or see anything."

"Doesn't she!" said Trelling. "Listen." He bent to the sleeping girl. "Ann, I want you to talk to me. Do you see these two ladies?"

His face had changed. Except as an audience, Ruth and her mother were forgotten.

"Ess fay, I du."

"These ladies will talk to you, Ann," said Trelling. "You

must imagine that I am speaking to you, and you must answer their questions as carefully as you can. Think of something or someone," he added quickly to Ruth, "she will know your thought."

Ruth pulled up one of the chairs, and took her place at the head of the couch.

"I am thinking of somebody, Ann." While she spoke she turned away her head, for she could not bear to look at the hideous face. "Can you see the person I am thinking of?"

There was the usual pause, and then Ann spoke out clearly and decidedly.

"Ess, it be a gentleman. I du see he in a green lane along av another gentleman. They be waaking faist side by side, an' taaking as they du go."

Ruth covered her face with her hands, even her neck had grown a shade whiter. The unexpected reply shocked her by its accuracy. "That is right," she whispered to her mother. "Hugh is with papa, they turned down Crick Lane. Tell me what—the gentleman—is like?" She pulled away her hands and clasped them in her lap, as she leaned forward, staring at the entranced girl. She sat motionless, but her body, it seemed, trembled inwardly. She was frightened, horribly frightened; all this was strange to her, she did not understand it. Ann Hand's voice stimulated her nerves to fresh terrors. She started again at the sound of it, for after another pause, Ann Hand spoke again.

"He be a dark-faced man, he be. His eyes be av the color of sloes. I"—she hesitated for an instant—"I have seen he before."

As the words came thickly from her, a change came over Trelling hardly less marked than that which had so altered Ruth. His face grew suddenly tense. A new symptom had presented itself—something not accounted for by any cause within his knowledge. Ann Hand asserted that she had seen this man before. Up to that, all had been easily comprehensible. She had seen the subject of Ruth's thought, attaining as he had directed, to the vision of the clairvoyant. But why

this further assertion, not lying in any sequence of hypnotic causation?

"You have not seen this gentleman before, Ann," he said decidedly, yet bending inquiring, curious eyes upon her.

The girl fidgeted. She seemed to be struggling with a firmly rooted belief.

Trelling persisted in his scrutiny.

"You have never seen that gentleman before, Ann."

Then he left the assertion to work its way. Afterwards he questioned her. "Have you seen him? Answer me."

There was no reply. He repeated the question.

"No." Ann was now obedient to the control of his will.

"This is the first time you have seen him?"

"Yes."

But Trelling was not satisfied. His experiment had produced, first the desired result, then something unforeseen. Some idea on this subject had worked in the subconscious mind of the origin of which he was ignorant. Was it possible that he had discovered a counter suggestion—another influence determining the movements of her tongue? He was determined to fathom the mystery, and in order to do that he must undo his suggestion that Templeton was a stranger to her; he must throw her into another stage of hypnosis, and sift her by questions until she had revealed the genesis of that baffling idea.

Pushing up Ann's sleeve, Trelling pressed upon the anæsthetic arm and made a few passes down her face.

The girl moved slightly and her breathing grew quieter, her face took a new expression, it seemed as though in that moment she had passed into a condition to which previously she had been well accustomed, into another state of being.

"Ann Hand," said Trelling, "the young lady next you is thinking of somebody."

"Yes."

"Of whom is she thinking?"

"Of a gentleman."

"You have seen that gentleman before."

"Yes."

"Now where have you seen him?"

There was no answer; the clock on the mantelpiece ticked out the seconds. Ann Hand was ill at ease, she seemed to be struggling with some half obliterated memory.

"I have seen 'ee twice," she said at last.

"When did you see him first?"

"He waz seated in the corner av a white room." The girl's voice sank to a monotonous chant as though she were repeating some words heard before and got by heart. "He waz reading words out of a book—what did you say?"

"I did not say anything."

"I thought you said, 'Do 'ee belong to be reading the words to anyone'?—somebody said that! I have heard they words before. They coom to me clear as clear. 'Do 'ee belong to be reading the words to anywan'?"

"I said nothing."

"Be sure you did, fur I did say in answer, 'He be reading tu a young gal with a white faace an' dark hair.' I did say that, I mind me wal. It be the young gal that sets here now, an' she be wearing a white dress the same as now. The room be full of light."

"Oh, mother!" Ruth's voice held a thrill that was almost pain. "Hugh—Francesca—he read it to me first in the white drawing-room." She sank on her knees by her mother's side and leaned her head upon her lap. "It's all true." A frightened tear pressed down her cheek as she nestled closer to her mother. "Hugh," she repeated. "Of course I was thinking of Hugh, but just for the moment I forgot that we had ever read together in the drawing room. What does it mean?" She pulled herself upright, pressing her hands against her eyes. "It isn't right! I know that it isn't right. We find out things that we were never intended to find out. Nobody is safe. Oh, let us go! This can only bring misery."

Elizabeth slipped an arm round Ruth's waist.

"Dear child," she said, "this is only the expression of some idea that she has got somehow. Perhaps she read your thoughts. Who knows? I have seen this done before; there is

nothing reliable in it, but it is extraordinarily interesting. Shall we go, Robert?"

Trelling looked at Elizabeth and her daughter with blank, unseeing eyes. He had not heard Lady Templeton's words nor Ruth's outcry. He was intent upon his own thoughts. This was the strangest result he had ever obtained through a long hypnotic practice. He was not in a fit state to question the justification of such research; the moral problem that appealed so strongly to Ruth. In another mood he might have realized it, as it was, he did not even hear her words; he was set passionately upon tracing the workings of the mind before him, into which he could see as in a glass darkly.

"Shall we go, Robert?" repeated Elizabeth.

Trelling turned to her as a man in his sleep.

"Go!" he repeated. "Why should you go? You don't disturb Ann. Heavens, I wish I could get to the root of all this. She has had this vision before, you know, but how she has had it I can't imagine! She has reverted to a former state and what she now sees is the vision of a vision. But how? I am at a loss! It is an absolute impossibility that she should have seen this while in Cornwall. There is no starting point as far as I can see, even for the most highly developed clairvoyant."

"Oh, mother, let us go!" Ruth was very near to tears. "A most horrible fear has come over me, I cannot tell what it is. I feel as though some evil had overshadowed us. I feel it at my heart. I can't get away from it. You don't seem to realize it, but I realize it and it shakes me with terror. It is some evil influence proceeding from this girl. I understand now what people mean by evil spirits and possession. It seems to me as though a strange spirit is occupying that body—a spirit that can talk reasonably and answer questions, while all the time it secretly mocks and jeers. It will trip us yet! Oh, come away! We don't want these things. We are not gods knowing good and evil. Oh, come away!"

Her words were fiery enough to pierce even Trelling's apathy. He laid his hand upon her shaking shoulder.

"My dear Ruth," he said, "this is nonsense. You are overwrought and therefore I should like you to stay and see how

foolishly these things can end. It was just a chance that you have been able to identify an actual occurrence with this girl's ravings, but only a chance I can assure you. As to these phenomena being the work of a spirit, it is nothing of the sort, only a disintegrated part of her own personality, which, because it is denied a normal existence, has assumed abnormal powers. Now I will ask her one or two more questions, and then I will wake her, and we will all return happily to lunch. If I let you go home now, you will be miserable and upset all day, and imagine you have watched wizardry, and then I shall feel myself a brute beast."

"Very well," Ruth nodded acquiescence, but turned and buried her face in her mother's shoulder.

Trelling, as though released from an unwelcome importunity, returned almost fiercely to his investigation of the problem presented by the prostrate figure that lay subject to him. As statements, he did not attach the least weight to the words that came from her; to him she did not describe actualities. He merely desired to trace the root and growth of an idea, and this he desired with an ardor inexplicable to an onlooker. Elizabeth watched him in wonder, mingled with disapprobation, as he bent to the sleeper.

"You say that you have seen this gentleman twice before, Ann?"

"Yes."

"When was the second time you saw him?"

"I counted the days," said Ann Hand, her voice rising and falling in its usual rhythm. "I counted forty-nine days, an' the time be nearly gone—forty o' they days be flitted by a'ready."

"Counted!" echoed Trelling to himself. "Counted! Why should she count! I don't understand." Then peremptorily, he pressed for confirmation of the theory to which his mind had leaped. "You have had a vision then, Ann Hand. Can you recall that vision? Look now, and tell me what you see."

Not a sound broke the silence. Ann's body twitched slightly and Ruth still hid her face in her mother's shoulder, rather than look upon anything so horrible. Then Ann began to speak.

"I see a room," she said; "cliffs an' the sea du show beyond the open window. A deal o' furniture du belong tu the room: the furniture be covered with some stoof that shines, there be big flures upon it. I see a man theer an' a woman—the man has black eyes an' a straight faace: he be the man I seed before."

"And the woman?" Ruth sat up and opened eyes that were still tearful. "Have you seen the woman before?"

But Trelling interrupted. "She has a white face and dark hair, and she is wearing a white dress." In his excitement he grew once more unconscious of Ruth's presence.

There was again silence. Again Ann Hand moved painfully.

"I don't know," she said, "the seet be braked. I cannot tell——"

Trelling bent his face so that his lips nearly touched the girl's ear. "Listen, Ann," he said, "you are in a room by the seaside. You can see the waves through the window. There is furniture in the room, covered with a flowery stuff that shines. Now, are you there?"

"Ess fay, I bee," said Ann Hand, in some relief.

"Well, then, go on, please. You see a man and a woman. What is the woman like?"

"She be a young gal, but not so young as t'other: her face be saft like a flure: her hair be glimmer gowd. She be a real beauty, she be, her eyelashes be av gowd tuu, but darker, and they du lie upon her cheeks when she du close her eyes. Her eyes be gray at times, and then again they du be brown. But orfen and orfen have I seed her on other days, fur she du help me with the crochet and the rush plaiting. She be dressed in rose color. The man have put his arms round she and——"

"Yes, yes," said Trelling quickly, "that will do." He had lifted his eyes to Ruth's face and what he saw there—the eagerness, the horror—the fascination for the first time put the thing in another aspect. A flood of deep red mounted to his forehead. Then he battled irritably with the growing shame that had fallen upon him. Had he, in reality, been pry-

ing into the secrets of another life? The idea appalled him. Then he put it away as absurd. He laughed at his fears. He was growing hysterical himself. Hypnotism could recall a memory and send home a suggestion, but it could do no more. Beyond this the hypnotic trance had given him only vague dreams and disjointed sentences. It would be a strange lunacy to put faith in such a vision after his experiences, and the thought came to him as an extraordinary relief. He felt as though a tight cord about his head was loosened; the flush upon his forehead died, and his voice came naturally, as he turned to Lady Templeton.

"You see what amazing nonsense these people sometimes talk," he said quickly. "This girl has seen a picture perhaps of the scene that she has just described, or she has heard a song or a story that has conveyed to her these impressions. That is what hypnotism does—it brings into the light of day all sorts of fleeting, half-forgotten images—dim ghosts of past realities—it confuses the real with the imaginary, the fact with the dreams. It is our business to sort out all this, to discern the true in the false, to tabulate, to arrange, to sift, until our gleanings take some definite shape from some sort of consecutive whole."

Ruth sat pensively looking in front of her: she had regained her self-possession.

"Yes," she said, "I see what you mean, but I do not think that this is nonsense. The first scene that she described was extraordinarily accurate. I remember the day well; she described my cousin, and she described me. Why should the rest be nonsense?"

Trelling felt a sudden alarm. What had he done? Could it be possible that she would take this thing seriously? Had he set in motion forces that it would be beyond his power to stay? The thought was a horror to him, and in the eagerness with which he disclaimed it, his preoccupation dropped from him. Ruth, and Ruth alone, occupied his mind. Would this morning's business hurt her in any way? Would it have consequences? Absurd! Impossible! And yet—Ruth was credulous and impressionable. She knew nothing whatever of the

vagaries of the hysteric, and the credulity of such ignorance was to him an abiding wonder. All this passed through his mind in a flash before he replied to her remark. Then he bestirred himself.

"Accurate!" he repeated. "Don't hope for accuracy from a clairvoyant! What they see once, they see again with the mistakes accentuated. Don't hope for truth either. This thing—hypotism—is in its infancy. It would be horrible if you were to take the farago of nonsense that we have just heard—seriously. How could you? It would be impossible! unthinkable! But I am to blame. I ought not to have let her work on these lines at all. It would have been better after all," he continued bitterly, "if I had let her burn her hand with a cold penny or something of that sort to amuse Sir Raymond and the Duchess."

"No. I am very glad, indeed, that you let her work on these lines as you call it. I suppose," she continued with an effort, "it is nonsense. But you must forgive me—I—from the very first I was unstrung and nervous about it. I am not capable now of forming a judgment. My reason tells me that it is nonsense, and yet I am curiously impressed. Please forgive me," she said again with a little nervous laugh. "I see that I am infecting you with my qualms."

Trelling turned helplessly to Elizabeth.

"Can't you make her distinguish between the raving of delirium and fact? I feel helpless."

"I will try," said Elizabeth, but her tone was doubtful. It seemed as though she, too, had caught Ruth's mood. With one hand in her daughter's, she stood looking down at the repulsive face upon the sofa. "How extraordinary it all is," she went on. "How can you account for it?"

"How can you account for anything?" said Trelling impatiently. "Ann Hand is not more extraordinary than we are. Can we account for ourselves? We see in her two personalities. Do we know how many personalities are contained in each one of us? Do we know what we are, or of what we are capable? Do we know what common sense is, or genius, or idiocy, or madness? We know nothing. We attribute it all

to a certain state of the brain. What do we know of what lies behind the brain? Nothing."

"And we are meant to know nothing," said Ruth decidedly. She spoke with her old spirit: she was now entirely herself. "I am quite sure that this kind of knowledge only leads to unhappiness. I don't want any more of it. We have enough knowledge to enable us to live and to grow and to be good—or try to be. That is all we want. What is the use of peering into these hidden things?"

During her words, Trelling's face had again changed. It now took on something of the keen, eager brightness with which he started the séance. His eyes glittered. Ruth had touched upon a subject that was for him the most vital thing in life, a mere reference to it stimulated him; he felt called upon to do battle for his faith. On one side lay his patient, whose soul was his lesson-book, and on the other the young girl whom he loved, and who in her ignorance essayed to be his tutor.

"What is the use of peering into these hidden things?" he said emphatically, striving to get his words into the inmost corners of her mind and thereby to justify himself. "What is the use? Because some day, while peering, we may find that the veil has been withdrawn and we may know in a sudden flash where we came from and where we are going to."

Ruth shook her head. "It is as vague as the Sphinx," she said. "You don't find the secret of eternity like this. I don't want to know the secret," she added quickly. Then she turned to Elizabeth. "Oh, mother, come away into the fresh air. I can't breathe here. Let us send that poor thing home to Cornwall, make a bonfire of Robert's books and save him against his will," he added, laughing.

"Won't you wait until I wake her?" said Trelling.

Ruth shuddered. "She is more horrible when she is awake. No, thank you. I never want to see her again."

So saying, she pushed the door open. The sunshine fell upon her white dress and hat. For one moment she stood on the step and drew a deep breath. Then she turned back and smiled at Trelling.

"Good-by," she said. "Now I am outside I feel like Proserpina. You can guess why. I have come up into the sun."

Trelling turned back into the cottage horribly ill at ease. He should never have allowed either Elizabeth or Ruth to have witnessed the scene that had taken place—so much was now apparent. A demonstration, that to him was a matter of course, had filled them with exorbitant fear. They were horrified and disgusted at the mere appearance of the unfortunate woman whose extraordinary condition had inspired him with such enthusiasm. In the midst of his uncomfortable thoughts he laughed at his emotion. A true hysteric with one side of her body entirely anæsthetic—the thought still had power to thrill him!

He woke Ann gently and sent her into the kitchen for her mid-day meal. Then he drew a chair to the table and sat down to consult his notes of the past ten days, and once more Ruth was forgotten. Perhaps it was an intuition of the possibility of such oblivion that had made it difficult for Ruth to realize Robert Trelling in the light of a lover. But he loved her none the less, and when he had folded up his pocketbook and clinical chart, the thought of her blazed up in him like a smoldering fire stirred to life. He pondered the emotion. Love is a disease of the mind—no, Elizabeth had told him that love is the light of the soul. "By Jove," he said to himself grimly, "it's neither. I've got it now. It's a bacillus that makes for health or sickness, according to the temperature of the blood."

Chapter Ten

"All knowledge begins and ends with wonder; but the first wonder is the child of ignorance; the last wonder is the parent of adoration."

S. T. COLERIDGE

IT was Sunday morning at Templeton. Elizabeth strolled with Ruth in the garden waiting for Sir Raymond to accompany them to church. When away from home Sir Raymond did not go to church at all, but he always read the lessons at Templeton: which only showed how remarkable was his sense of responsibility. He attended divine worship as a duty that he owed to his fellow men. He went to read the lessons and to set an example. Mrs. Whitter said that his voice was "bell-like," and his presence there an "inspiration"; certainly the old people from the village said the responses with greater unction when the Squire was in church.

To-day he was a little late. Vivian Vissian, who wore his arm in a sling, declared that the baronet had been throwing his boots at his valet. One had hit him as he passed the open door of the dressing room, and he was thereby too disabled to go to church.

"Vivian will stay at home and play at church with prayer-books," he said in reply to Mrs. Whitter's remonstrances. "He will preach himself a sermon on the sins of society and reduce himself to tears: then he will go home fluttered by a gentle emotion and reap the reward of saintliness."

"I don't do that," said Mrs. Whitter. "I always invent hats in church—such ducks of hats! But it's very hard to concentrate on them properly, because the service interrupts so often; one is always being called off, as it were, to say that one is a miserable sinner or something of that sort. Still I always come home from church wildly hungry. I must say that there is nothing like virtue to produce an appetite. By the way, I want a threepenny bit for the collection!" She lifted her

golden chain purse and emptied its contents—one sovereign, two half sovereigns and a shilling—upon the hall table.

"There isn't a three-penny bit!" said Vivian. "You'll have to give the shilling."

Mrs. Whitter looked properly shocked.

"You'll come to no good, my child, if you are as extravagant as that! But for other reasons, I never give a shilling; it's such a middle-class sum. When they hand me a plate, I give half a sovereign to set an example, but when it is a bag I always put in a three-penny bit. That is what three-penny bits are made for."

"I suppose it is," said Vivian thoughtfully; "that is the only reason why such a ridiculous coin could have been invented. It is odd that I should never have thought of it before. Stay, dear, dearest Mrs. Whitter; don't go! You have inspired a quatrain. May I write it in the fly leaf of your prayer-book."

"Not for Paradise!" cried Mrs. Whitter. "I must keep that respectable."

Vivian laughed. "The poem you have inspired is quite respectable. It is, indeed, although that mayn't seem likely. It is on almsgiving. Listen:

"My God, is threepence all I give,
Concealed in silver form,
To help my clergyman to live
And keep the curate warm!

Will that do?"

"Very ingenious! But don't get tart, my dear Vivian, the *enfant terrible* is a prettier rôle for little Vivian than the misanthrope, and I don't like poems that invoke the Deity; I consider it irreverent. Ah!"

The exclamation was evoked by the sight of Sir Raymond, who issued into the garden from the library window, peacefully benignant. A flush spread itself on Mrs. Whitter's face. She smiled.

Her appreciation touched the great man; he bent his head in return, and then proceeded darkly towards his wife and

daughter; for Elizabeth there were no smiles, but then Elizabeth was curiously lacking appreciation.

"Where is Robert?" said Sir Raymond, in a tone of somber irritation.

"I am not sure," replied Elizabeth. "I have not seen him this morning. Hugh has gone to church by the plantation, and will meet us in the porch."

"Hm, I wish you could convey delicately to Robert that church-going is one of the things expected of our guests, and that in neglecting it he is guilty of a breach of good manners. It is a pity that he cannot be a little more like Hugh."

"Yes, dear," said Elizabeth with a faint sigh.

"Now what are you sighing for?" said Sir Raymond testily; "I tell you what it is, Elizabeth, if you approach the world in that dismal spirit, everything you touch will give you back gloom. A Christian should be able to look upon even the tragedies of life with sustained cheerfulness."

"Yes, dear," answered Elizabeth. "I—am—sure he should." Involuntary her lips twitched.

"There is no need to display levity," said Sir Raymond. "I don't think there was anything exactly humorous in my remark." He turned to his daughter. "Ruth, it would be considerate of you if you would go back and walk with Mrs. Whitter; she is alone."

With a glance at her mother the girl obeyed.

Sir Raymond stood still and watched her.

"What is the matter with Ruth?" he said after a moment. "She is like a drooping lily. Too much engagement, eh?"

A guarded distress shone from Elizabeth's eyes.

"I wish I knew," she said. "Oh, I wish I knew. We went to the Lodge to see Robert hypnotize that poor Ann Hand, and the sight seemed to give Ruth a shock. She has not been the same since."

"I wish to God that Robert would mind his own business," said Sir Raymond with fervor. "A tiresome, obstinate, head-strong—and his experiments all end in nonsense—he got no result while the Duchess was here—I shall send that disgusting lunatic home at the first possible opportunity!"

"Hush, Raymond." Elizabeth laid a hand upon his arm. "Here he is. He is going to church after all."

That Ruth had not been the same since that hypnotic séance, was obvious. She drooped visibly. Hugh Templeton noticed it, and it filled him with disquiet. Robert Trelling noticed it, and against his will, hope sprang green in his heart. What had happened? Had the lovers quarreled? Nobody knew, but everybody surmised; the subject occupied the thoughts of more than one member of the Templeton party during morning prayers. It filled the intervals of more personal meditation. Sir Raymond pondered upon the grievances of Sir Raymond. Mrs. Whitter elaborated imaginary hats and supplied motives for her young friend's conduct. Even Elizabeth found it difficult to fix her thoughts upon her prayers, her mind was vagrant and had to be recalled more than once from her daughter's engagement.

"Why don't you take a tonic, Ruth?" asked Mrs. Whitter, as they strolled homewards under the great elms. The girl's white cheeks and darkened eyes justified the question. "A tonic is ripping, it makes one long for one's meals."

But Ruth declined. "I never take drugs," she said shortly. "I am too healthy. I have no nerves either."

She spoke truly. It was not a tonic that she wanted now, but freedom from a cobweb of a dream that had somehow caught her and impeded her going. She despised herself for being influenced by it, but at the same time the toils of the thing grew day by day stronger, and she, it seemed, weaker and less able to grapple with them. She had discovered that she loved Hugh Templeton: she had surrendered to him, and now, in the manner of a proud woman, her pride lay in her meekness. From henceforward she brought appreciation to bear upon his sayings and doings rather than criticism.

Templeton noticed the change in her, and according to his usual custom, probed her heart in searching for the cause. He told her laughingly that he considered now, that his strongest rival was a sense of duty, and that he declined to be loved by his prospective wife from a sense of duty.

That afternoon when sitting in an unfrequented part of the

garden with an arm flung round her, Templeton's irritability with Ruth's obtrusive virtues reached a climax. "I wish to Heaven that you had been somebody else's wife, Ruth!" he said, "then I could have run away with you. As it is I can never be sure of you now. When you are my wife, you will love me because you love God or some nonsense of that sort. There isn't a man living who wants to be loved because his wife loves God."

The girl quivered and then half drew herself away from the encircling arm. Templeton tightened his grasp.

"Would you like me better if——" She did not finish the sentence.

"If you did not love God? Of course I should. A man can love God if he wants to, but a woman has got to love her husband. Now I did not say that. St. Paul or somebody said it."

"Oh, Hugh, stop!" Ruth unclasped her hands nervously. "I wonder if I can ever make you understand." Words were a great difficulty to her; she was afraid of saying too much or too little. "Since I have loved you, I have thought very little about—God. Somehow my prayers have died away upon my lips, and my reading has become impossible. It all seems to be unreal. There is silence all round me—silence and you. But there is always—always you." She stopped suddenly, and her breathing came quicker. The strain of such intimate speech on a reserved nature had, indeed, been very great.

Templeton smiled complacently. When he spoke again his voice had a true ring in it; it came from his heart.

"That's all right," he said cheerfully. "Don't bother. That's just as it should be."

But this reckless, grasping, passionate mood was a state superimposed upon Ruth from outside, and although for the time it dominated her, there was at first nothing to answer to it from within. Her soul stood aloof, as it were, in silence. She bent under a weight of emotion, that closed the channel through which happiness, peace, and a divine charity had been wont to flow reviving and feeding her whole being. And as a result she dwindled. Her cheeks fell in, and black circles appeared about her eyes. She could not sleep; she could not

even rest. She was as a person deprived of natural sustenance and fed in some strange and artificial manner. Just as Elizabeth drew her physical life from the realization of the divine about her, so also Ruth had lived, seeing in all outward things the symbol of that perfection towards which she strove continually. Now all was abruptly changed; the material side of life had reasserted itself strongly, brutally. She was in the grip of forces she could not control, but which she knew well would have had no power over her at all, if she in the first place had not permitted their presence. And as time went on, the dream that Ann Hand had conjured up haunted her continually. In the daytime it was shadowy, but at night it took on such reality that Ruth actually seemed to stand in the room that the hypnotic had described—(the room gay with chintz and flowers, within sound of the sea), an unseen spectator of the actors in that silent play. Invariably, on waking, the remembrance of that vision brought with it a shiver that had the power to sting and burn. She became jealous, suspicious, and full of hatred towards an imaginary woman. More than once when she had received from Templeton a light answer to some tentative question, she had found herself wondering vaguely if he had told her the truth. Then she reddened to find it possible that such a thought could have crossed her mind. To distrust Templeton, she argued, was only to prove her own horrible unworthiness. So, at last, the evil worked in her life as a poison—discoloring everything she touched.

“You had better marry Ruth quickly!” Mrs. Whitter remarked to Hugh Templeton. “If you wait much longer, there will be nothing to marry. She is shriveling before our eyes.”

Her words accelerated Templeton’s desire to hasten on the marriage, but at the same time roused uncomfortable considerations. The inevitable bulky letter with the Cornish postmark was once more newly laid inside his pocketbook.

To Elizabeth this change in Ruth was a trouble that had swallowed up all lesser difficulties and regrets. But according to her wont, she watched and said nothing, until chance one day gave her an opportunity to speak. Ruth was reserved with

the reserve of a very young and inexperienced girl, and Elizabeth knew that this was a thing not to be lightly tampered with; it was the tabernacle of the holy place, and the mother dreaded to withdraw the veil even by the lightest touch. But the love between the two was so deep and the sympathy so entire, that Ruth felt even without words that Elizabeth knew her trouble, and Elizabeth knew that she knew it and was comforted.

Her opportunity to speak came one morning when she sat as usual working at her embroidery frame. Ruth was reading aloud to her from a volume of that quaintest of philosophers, Sir Thomas Browne; she had reached the last sentence of her reading for the day.

"Have a glimpse of incomprehensibles; and thoughts of things, which thoughts but tenderly touch. Lodge immaterials in thy head; ascend into invisibles; fill thy spirit with spirituals, with the mysteries of faith, the magnalities of religion, and thy life with the honor of God."

She closed the book with a sigh. Then her mother lifted her eyes and smiled at her.

"Those are long words, aren't they, Ruth? But how splendid they are! They are 'thoughts of things, which thoughts but tenderly touch.' That is as delicate and impalpable as the scent of a flower, isn't it? And how spacious that last sentence is. 'Fill thy life with the honor of God'."

Elizabeth ceased speaking, but continued to smile upon her daughter, and as she did so she noticed that something in the phrase had induced two tears that were trickling down Ruth's cheeks. She left her embroidery frame and came up to where the girl sat.

"Ruth, darling," she said, "you are my only child and you know how much I love you. But in this trouble, whatever it is, I feel that I am powerless to help you. Only remember this, if you have any thought, or desire, or affection in your heart, that is not filled with the honor of God, you will be restless and unhappy. You have known how beautiful a thing life can be. How can you ever accept anything less than the best you know. My love, my dear, I can do so little,

but if ever you want me—I am your mother—and—I am here.”

Ruth lifted her tear-stained face silently, and Elizabeth bent down and kissed her. Then she moved quietly away across the gallery, and as Ruth listened to the gentle movement of her skirts, she knew that she was going towards the little chapel where, as she had so often done, she would kneel down and pray once more for the daughter who of late had found it so difficult to pray for herself.

The thought flooded the girl's heart with thankfulness and with pain, and in the tears that it brought her, all suspicion, hate, jealousy, and even the unwilling part of that restless feverish love itself, were washed away.

But Ruth's peace was not permanent. As the days went by the effect of her mother's words became obliterated and the sickness of her soul returned. So miserable was she that she almost wished to be free of her engagement, although oddly enough her love for Templeton seemed to thrive on the deterioration of her ideals and grow stronger on unrest and suspicion. It was impossible to talk to him of her trouble, for he did not understand her scruples, or indeed any of the finer shades of character which distinguished Ruth. He could see that she was restless, but he only put it down to some girlish nonsense that marriage would cure, and although she longed to question him on the subject of Ann Hand's hypnotic dream, she did not dare, for she felt that any question of that kind would only reveal her own unworthiness, and very likely implicate Trelling in disagreeable explanations. No man, least of all her lover, would wish to be the subject of such an experiment, a fact that Robert Trelling in his white hot zeal had completely and culpably overlooked. So Ruth found no outlet for her trouble, which caused sudden moods in her and equally sudden demonstrations of affection. Templeton was uneasy too, for which uneasiness he had his own reasons. He desired to be perpetually doing something and talked incessantly first of their wedding and then of their honeymoon. His love-making was conducted almost entirely in anticipation of future happiness. In fact, the present mo-

ment—a time so absorbing to most lovers—was by Ruth and Hugh completely ignored; she, without knowing it, was already yearning for the past, and he very definitely had thrown all his thoughts into the future. He intended taking her to Italy. Ruth thought that she preferred a quiet nook in England, but Templeton had had enough for the present of the quiet of the country and exclaimed at the horrors of an English winter.

“No, no, we will go to blue seas and happy people, Ruth,” he exclaimed. “Everything here is so gray. I hate gray—it gets into my soul!”

Ruth looked round her. They were spending the afternoon in the woods, and now sat for a moment resting on a slope carpeted with fallen pine needles. Through the trees some ponds gleamed gray in the afternoon light, and beyond this the smoke from the home farm, partly hidden by the trees, hung like fluff in a gray sky. Templeton was quite right. This afternoon gray was the predominating color—gray, dull greens, and the brown of turning leaves.

“Yes,” she said, “it is gray, but I like it.”

Looking at her absently, Templeton noted how much Ruth was a part of the picture. There was nothing striking in the scheme of her coloring: her complexion was fresh and delicate, her eyes wide and clear, and her brown hair seemed to take its tint from her surroundings—she emerged from the grayness quiet and perfect as a Whistler Symphony.

“Of course I like it, too,” he replied, “I love it—first for itself and secondly because it is ours. It is doubly ours, isn’t it, Ruth?—first yours, and then mine. How odd to think that in reality I can give you nothing. My dear, in the future I will *lend* Templeton to you.” He laughed at her affectionately.

“Then why did you want to get away so much?”

“I don’t want to get away. I want to get you away, which is quite a different thing.” He covered one of her little hands as he spoke. “I want to have you all to myself, Ruth. Here I feel that you belong to so many people. I have to share you with—everybody.”

Ruth laughed at him gently.

"I don't think that you ever share me."

"Don't I? There's Aunt Elizabeth in the first place, but as a matter of fact I can't even be said to share you with her, for you belong to her a great deal more than to me. Then there is——"

"Oh, nobody else, surely!"

"Yes, there is Bess and the pigeons, and the bees, all the horrid old women in the village, and your girls' club, and dozens of people!"

Ruth sighed.

"I have only fed the pigeons once since you have been here, and whenever I want to go and read to the old women, you always have something for me to do."

"Of course I have!" replied Templeton, showering little bits of pine needles and clean fragrant odds and ends of twigs and bracken upon her hands and frock, "of course I have. I want you always—always, do you hear? You have an object in life now, dear Ruth. You have to attend to me. Don't you think——"

He stopped short, for out of the tangle of briars and bracken, behind him, there came a rustling. He paused, listening. "What was that?" Perhaps it was the weight of secret thought that each kept hidden in the dark places of the heart, or perhaps it was the strange gray silence of the woods that had affected them this afternoon, but both Hugh and Ruth had become singularly nervous.

"What is that?" cried Templeton again irritably. "Is there anybody there?"

"It is a bird, perhaps," said Ruth, "or a rabbit." But even as she spoke a fear crept into her eyes. She could not shake it off. She felt paralyzed, shrouded as it were by something dark and ominous.

"Is there anybody there?" Templeton called again.

A long low laugh replied to his words—a sound rather than a laugh, and yet a sound that held in it mockery and defiance. It was what the laugh of an animal might have been—or a creature with the dull half-sinister wits of an animal.

Ruth grew colorless, and stretching out her hands she grasped Templeton's arm. "Let us go, Hugh," she said quickly.

"Nonsense!" replied Templeton; "there is some impertinent village boy there. Don't let such an absurd thing affect you, Ruth."

"Ah, let us go!" the girl clung to him closer. "I am afraid. There is a blight over the world to-day. It is all gray and dim, with strange and horrible things moving in it." She shivered as she spoke, and he could feel that she was trembling.

For one second Templeton looked searchingly at her, and in that second it flashed across him how great the change in her had become. He could hardly believe that this nervous woman, trembling at the sound of a movement in a bush, was the calm, reserved, self-reliant girl, gloriously healthy, gloriously sane, whom he had found upon his arrival at Templeton. The change was indeed complete.

"Let us go, let us go!" she pleaded.

"You shall go when I have unearthed the bogey," replied Templeton resolutely, "not before! Let go of my arm, darling. I want to beat that bit of bracken—and something else too, I hope, that isn't bracken!"

"Look," said Ruth faintly. "It's—it's looking at us."

"It! What?" Templeton followed her gaze, and his eyes were met by a face, uncouth and hideous, that leered at him from behind the brown stalks of the bracken, with a disgusting glee: the lolling eyes leered as though all his secret thoughts were free to them, the food for hideous laughter.

"Trelling's idiot!" exclaimed Templeton in a whisper. "By Heaven, this is too much! There is nothing for it, I suppose, but to go. The place isn't safe. It's a sort of Colney Hatch. I shall speak to Uncle Raymond at once. Come, dear."

But Ruth was staring at the creature in front of her with an infinite horror in her eyes. The sight came as the culminating point in a day of unrest. It revived all the horror of a week ago. It summed up all the darkness of her heart and seemed in some strange way to connect her with a dim and

terrible world beyond, of which hitherto she had no conception. The thing in front of her grinning and mocking with outstretched finger and lolling eyes was her own thought materialized.

"Ah! Ah!" cried the idiot, gibbering.

It was too much. Ruth covered her face with her hands, and the earth of green and gray and fair brown leaves rolled away from her, leaving her in space with some foul hovering thing that held her prostrate as it were by magic, while it fed upon her mocking in the silence.

"Ah! Ah!" cried Ann Hand again.

Ruth's pain had become physical. She could bear it no longer. Crouching on the ground and covering her face with her hands, she gave way to floods of hysterical tears.

Templeton sprang to his feet. "Be off!" he cried to the idiot, "Get away! Go home!"

But his words only brought about more contortions and the inarticulate gibberings rose at last to a succession of shrill screams. He slipped an arm round Ruth.

"Ruth," he said, "don't cry. You must come back at once: it is tea-time. Make an effort, my dear, and you will be all right. There is nothing to be afraid of in all this, but it's mightily unpleasant. Trelling ought to be shot!" he added savagely.

But Ruth was unable to stir until her sobs had spent themselves. She sat upon the ground crying like a frightened child, and all the time the idiot yelled more and more diabolically. At last she grew calmer. She put away her handkerchief and sat up. Then shutting her eyes, she pressed both hands upon her forehead and remained silent; soon she was able to stand.

"It is over," she said with a dim smile. "I am better. I am sorry for having been so stupid. I can walk back quite well now, thank you. I—I think Mrs. Martin ought to be told that Ann Hand is alone in the woods, don't you?"

"I should rather think she ought," said Templeton between his teeth. "And someone else too!"

Mrs. Whitter, Vivian Vissian, and Elizabeth, feeling vaguely

that the hour of tea was about to arrive, had congregated in the drawing room leading on to the Terrace, but Sir Raymond and Robert Trelling had not yet responded to the appeal. As Hugh Templeton crossed the lawn with Ruth, Mrs. Whitter walked over to the window.

"How exceedingly early Victorian that couple look—promenading arm in arm!" she exclaimed. "There is an unusual droop about Ruth's shoulders, too, which gives her the aspect of a female of 1850. All women were females then, weren't they?"

"Just as they were ladies when I was a little boy, and women now!" said Vivian. "My mamma was a lady!"

By this time the couple had reached the Terrace, and Mrs. Whitter had a clearer view of them.

"How awful Ruth looks!" she cried in horrified tones. "She is ill. Something must have happened."

Elizabeth rose quickly and without any fuss opened the long window and walked quietly towards her daughter. Hugh began explanations, but Lady Templeton cut them short. Ruth's face was swollen: her aspect spoke more plainly than his words. It spoke to Elizabeth piteously and the mother longed to hide away her child somewhere from the reach of men, and heal and comfort her. She longed to kiss Ruth's pale lips into smiles; she longed to clothe her with an impregnable affection that no human being, however cunning, might break through. But she only spoke a few quiet words and hardly a look betrayed her thoughts.

"Ruth had better come into my room and lie down. She can have some tea brought to her up there."

She drew the girl's hand under her arm and led her in by another door in order to avoid the procession of the butler and the two footmen who were bringing tea.

In the absence of Elizabeth Mrs. Whitter officiated at the big round tea-table, and when the elaborate and somewhat substantial meal had been arranged, the two men drew up their chairs.

"Well, Hugh," said Mrs. Whitter, her duties accomplished, "has Ruth been bitten by a mad dog—or what?"

Templeton buttered his toast viciously. The more he thought of the episode the more angry he became, until at last he felt himself filled with an illimitable fury towards Trelling.

"Yes," he said, "a mad dog. I said at the time that he ought to be shot."

"Do be explicit, Hugh," returned Mrs. Whitter; "your dark sayings trouble my head."

Abruptly Templeton told her what had happened; he made no comment on the occurrence.

His story was received in silence.

"Hum," said Mrs. Whitter meditatively; "it isn't like Ruth to be so much upset as that; she is generally rather a strong-minded person. I have known her do the most dangerous things without turning a hair, and she has absolutely no nerves."

"But she has been bitten by a mad dog," persisted Vivian. "I am quite sure that Mr. Templeton's first account of the affair is the true one. It is so much the most likely. At the last moment he substituted another story. *Why* a lunatic, Mr. Templeton, when you could have had a mad dog? There is one thing, though—whatever dog, mad or sane, dared to bite Ruth, it will die most certainly.

"'The girl recovered of the bite
The dog it was that died.'

"Ruth will recover—really nice people always do—and the nasty vicious little doglet will die. Some more tea for Vivian, Cousin Tom," he went on. "Some more tea and a dear ickle ducky pink cakeekins."

Chapter Eleven

"I stand in the sunlight, but the world is darkened for me, by my own shadow."—*The Thoughts of Monica Holden.*

THE next day Ann Hand was sent to Paris to the hypnotic hospital and Robert Trelling wore, so said Mrs. Whitter, the aspect of a whipped dog. Ruth was on the verge of a break-down for which Trelling blamed himself. He could not forget his share in the catastrophe, and the more he thought about it, the more he wondered at his blindness. It seemed now inconceivable that with all his knowledge of human nature he should not have realized the effect that such phenomena must have had upon a young and inexperienced girl; and—bitterest irony of all—he was of necessity dumb when Elizabeth came to him for advice. He cursed Ann Hand, the Duchess of Kidderminster, Sir Raymond, and himself above them all. By his frenzy and foolishness—his criminal conduct, so he put it—Ruth had become a prey to the wildest fears and imaginations—a fit case for that last word of failure, the rest cure. But a disappointed lover, doctor though he be, could hardly separate a happy couple on the eve of marriage.

A fuller knowledge would have comforted him. Ruth had been unnerved by the séance, and the sudden apparition of Ann Hand in the wood had brought the trouble to a climax; but, had her mind been at peace, these things would have touched her only with a passing wonder, and, since she could do nothing to help them, with a pity soon to be forgotten. Ruth had in the sudden conflict of the soul that was the prelude of her love for Templeton, realized for the first time a clash between her desires and her ideals. Also she had become vaguely conscious of some outside evil that to her disturbed imagination lived incarnate in the distortion of Ann Hand. Here was a patient for Trelling. But he could not cure her; to this mind diseased he could not minister. And apart from

any other consideration, he was in no fit state to do so. The physician also needed a cure. Love, as he had said, is a bacillus that makes for health or sickness according to the temperature of the blood. In Ruth's case, as in his own, it had made for sickness. He recommended Elizabeth to Sir Benjamin Reade, a nerve specialist working on his own lines—a crank in the opinion of his profession, but a successful one—and Elizabeth, consulting this man, found no doubt in his mind as to the advisability of sending Ruth away from home and at once. Elizabeth had feared as much, but she placed absolute confidence in the doctor and his methods.

Old in years, Sir Benjamin was more modern than the youngest of his contemporaries. His house in Wigmore Street had always been a doctor's house, but his waiting room, gay with flowers and pictures, startled those who remembered it in the days of his predecessor, who for the delectation of the suffering had displayed stuffed birds, dusty travelers' trophies, and upon the wall prints of the Last Judgment and of Diabolus storming the City of Mansoul. The great nerve doctor had swept these things away, letting in light and air upon the mustiness of a past generation.

During his interview with Ruth he had questioned her and noted the answers in the conventional book. But the questions were unconventional. They did not deal entirely with bodily functions, but with her mental life—her interests, her opinions, her religion. She nearly laughed outright when the fact that she had been engaged to her cousin for nearly three weeks was recorded in a separate paragraph. But after that, in speaking of it again, she had faltered, hesitated, and to her intense chagrin, had blushed almost to tears. Then with an effort she controlled herself, for the kind shrewd eyes that seemed to penetrate to her inmost thought were, she felt instinctively, the eyes of a friend. At last the book was closed.

"Well?"

"She must go away for a time."

Elizabeth bent forward. "Yes, I was prepared for that. But not—not a regular rest cure?"

"Yes—a regular rest cure."

Ruth looked at the doctor blankly; dismay silenced her until his decision stung her into remonstrance.

"A rest cure, Sir Benjamin!"

The smile in the old man's eyes deepened.

"Why not?"

"It would kill me. I should have to lie in bed and over-eat myself! I know! I should have to be massaged until I could scream and afterwards I should cry myself sick from sheer low spirits and weariness. I should look out of the window (if my bed were near it), all day and lie awake all night. Oh, I know what a rest cure is like! It is a horror! Dozens of people have told me. No, thank you, I *won't* have a rest cure, Sir Benjamin; I will go on being ill."

The doctor moved his black-coated shoulders and with one finger tapped the table as though to prove that in producing him Evolution had worked upon the usual lines, so that however modern his heart might be, the professional forefinger and the good bedside manner remained, as did the vermiform appendix or the rudimentary tail.

"My dear young lady, I will give you a rest cure that will not be a horror," he replied, "but a delight; and you will return from it a more finished person, if you will allow me to use the word, than before your sickness. You will see the issues of your life more clearly. A philosopher with whom I do not always agree says somewhere, 'You must be compelled to mount above yourself before you can see below yourself, and only thus will the ground and background of all things become apparent to you.' I want to enable you to mount above yourself," he went on, "and to mount above all, whatever it may be—that is taking away your sleep, and your appetite, and your pleasure in the world. I want to tighten your hold on life." Again he paused, and again the forefinger tapped the table. "I want to give you rest and peace—rest that is work, and peace that is like a prism reflecting the energy of light. Now you must be obedient." His tone had changed and he turned suddenly and faced Ruth—again in a professional attitude—with both hands upon the arms of his chair. "You must begin at the beginning."

"How?" asked Ruth, staring at him. His words were parallel to her own unspoken and unformulated thought; she was forced to listen to them.

"You must go away for a time with one friend, a woman older than yourself with whom you are in sympathy." He turned to Elizabeth. "If you do not know of a suitable person, I will send Miss Templeton with one of my own trained nurses."

"I will try and think of somebody," replied Elizabeth.

"Then,"—once more Ruth had his entire attention,—"you are to receive no letters—nothing at all. You are to detach yourself from the past, and from the future, and live only in the present, which, if you do what I tell you, will not be disagreeable. You are to go to bed at nine o'clock, get up at seven, and spend at least five hours a day in the open air. Do you walk well?"

"Yes."

"Do you ride and bicycle?"

"Yes."

"Ride, then, and walk, and bicycle in all weathers. Don't trouble about getting wet; it won't hurt you. Follow your usual occupations—the things that interest you—but do not be idle for one moment unless you are asleep. Sleep a great deal: sleep is a more potent food than bread, but do not encourage a half sleep that is neither work nor rest, life nor oblivion. It is in that borderland of consciousness that the enemy sows his tares. Therefore the moment you wake, get up, even with your eyes shut. These things sound to you absurd. Go away and do them. They are matters of life and death. Certain physical actions bring about certain mental states, and vice versa. Live a disciplined regular physical life and a disciplined regular mental life—this last is the most important—and for the time being separate yourself from your ordinary surroundings. Then your judgments will be sane and your opinions worth having, to say nothing of health which ultimately determines happiness, or if you like, the reverse of the phrase, happiness of the right sort that ultimately determines health—now what about books?" he

said, abruptly changing the subject. "You will want books—and plenty of them. Send me a list and I will add to it. By the way,"—he turned to his notes and looked up an entry,—“you are a religious woman?”

The question startled Ruth. "Yes," she said—"I—I think—I hope—so."

"Very well then, spend a certain time every day in realizing that your doubts and fears, qualms and scruples, don't matter in the least—that they are a necessary part of growth. If you are hesitating over a decision of any kind, leave that alone for the present. During your cure you are to live a detached life as I told you before; and when you come out of it, you will, in all probability, find that the thing that puzzled you has decided itself. In any case you will know then, beyond a doubt, what to do. But as to books, be very careful what religious books you take. Religion is a medicine and sometimes it is a sick person who has written the prescription. If you will allow me to suggest, there is a quaint old book called 'The Valiant Woman' that will not hurt you. But for the present leave your A Kempis at home—and all such books, excellent and wonderful as they are. Take poetry and a few pleasant novels that portray character without meddling in problems." He stopped short, looking down searchingly at his patient as though he had a great deal more to say. Then apparently he changed his mind. "That is all," he added abruptly. "Do not forget your prescription."

"It will be a difficult one to follow."

"That was the opinion of Naaman the leper when he went to see his specialist. Every patient hankers for Abana and Pharpar. Listen, now, my rest cure falls into two parts. Obey first my rules for your body, and let your soul take care of itself. Then obey my rules for your soul, and let your body take care of itself. At the end of it all if you have been obedient, something will happen."

Lady Templeton, looking up quickly to see if the old man was laughing, understood for the first time what people meant in describing Sir Benjamin Reade as a crank. The minute wrinkles on his forehead and about his mouth were the

wrinkles of the enthusiast, and his light blue eyes held in them the strange unworldly light that comes to people who do not recognize worldly standards. At present they twinkled with a smile which Elizabeth, encouraged, replied to by a question. She liked to make him talk.

"How very startling! Why will something happen?" she said, and then she laughed outright at the ridiculous words.

"At the end of my rest cures something always happens," returned the doctor quietly.

"Something!" questioned Ruth.

"No magic, I assure you," Sir Benjamin laughed. "I have no dealings with the devil. I will explain. It is very simple. When your cure is complete you will be so strong mentally and physically, that you will be longing to use your strength, and when that is so there is always a way. There is always something. You will find out what it is for yourself. Only do not forget what I have told you—*something will happen.*"

He moved to indicate that the interview was over, and as Ruth and her mother rose up to go, he pressed the electric button to admit another patient. Ruth felt a finality in his manner that told her that his interest in her case was for the time being suspended: she was left to work out her cure and await the forthcoming event.

During the drive home Elizabeth sat silent. Her part in this cure was to be no small one. She had to find the ideal companion for Ruth. It was all very well for Sir Benjamin to say that should she fail, he would send her daughter away with one of his trained nurses. "Trained!" thought Elizabeth. "Trained, in what? In all goodness, and all wisdom, having an infinite understanding of the human heart, a knowledge of life and a contempt of death. Where shall I find such a person? Shall I advertise 'Companion wanted. Half angel, half philosopher, and wholly human. Must be cheerful, domesticated, and a lady. Salary no object, but a sense of humor indispensable.' Strange old man! And yet—ah, pray God he give me back my daughter." For it seemed to her indeed that of late Ruth had become a changeling. She looked out of the

window occupied with these thoughts, as the carriage turned down the crowded thoroughfares to their hotel.

The Templetons had no London house, but rented one convenient during the season, and this time, in spite of permanent pressing invitations, Elizabeth had, as it were, crept up to town on the sly to consult the doctor and to be alone with Ruth. She rejoiced in the uninterrupted companionship and the freedom from responsibility, grudging the moments, for she could be away from Templeton at most but three days. At the same time she was afraid of being recognized: so many people would have been displeased had they known she had taken even a flying visit to town without coming to gossip over lunch or afternoon tea. She therefore hurried into the hotel with an absurd air of guilt, followed by Ruth, whose young head was always carried haughtily.

After lunch, at which not even the most remote acquaintance was to their knowledge present, mother and daughter sat together in their sitting room, Elizabeth resting on the sofa and Ruth languidly turned over the pages of a magazine. Suddenly Lady Templeton exclaimed:

"I know! Monica Holden!"

Ruth had already followed the path of her thoughts. "I had arrived at that before," she said, laughing. "I would rather go away with Aunt Monica than with anybody else in the world. I wondered when you would suggest her."

Indeed it was strange that the thought of Monica as Ruth's companion had not occurred to Elizabeth before. Although no relation, she had always been Aunt Monica to Ruth, and took the next place to her mother in the girl's affections. She was a singularly suitable person; happy and reposeful, she diffused around her an atmosphere of peace. Elizabeth seized on the plan with an immense relief, and later on, dispatched a long letter to Cornwall explaining the circumstances—she knew that she could count upon her friend's help. When that was done, she was quite ready to go home to Templeton. But she did not cease to ponder the advantages and disadvantages of the scheme. Trevean, where Monica's cottage was situated, was delightful, high up on the moors, within sound of the

sea; but Elizabeth would have preferred that, had it been possible, Ruth might have avoided Cornwall. Still she felt the presence of Monica to be all important, and the fact that Ann Hand was as far off now as Paris, would do much to sever any association of ideas. She did not know how the thought had swept Ruth's mind the moment Cornwall was mentioned and how it was for that reason that she had refrained from mentioning the name of Monica Holden to her mother. Cornwall was the scene of Ann Hand's vision. Ruth could never forget it. But she considered that her mother probably thought the matter of small importance, and would regard such feelings perhaps as mere superstitions. The doctor also had not mentioned any particular place. So Ruth said nothing. She would have been ashamed to raise so morbid an objection. She put the thought from her—determined to carry out Sir Benjamin's advice in every detail.

Trelling's relief at the decision was enormous, and so penitent was he for his share in bringing about Ruth's illness, and so concerned about her present health that the girl wondered how she could ever have had it in her heart to be annoyed with him. He watched her furtively and was always at hand to do her a service. He sent her books and flowers, and it was painful to Elizabeth to see how his whole aspect brightened when Ruth turned to him for advice or for approval.

The only person who actively disapproved of the method of Ruth's cure was, as might have been expected, Hugh Templeton.

"What nonsense it all is!" he complained, "a rest cure! Rubbish! The essence of a rest cure is that it should be disagreeable. The patient is then cured by release. Can't Ruth stay at home here in Templeton and live in the coal cellar? That would cure her twice as quickly as Cornwall. And why Cornwall—of all places in the world? Is it because the journey there is the most fatiguing in England—or what?"

Elizabeth explained that Trevean was in Cornwall and that

Trevean was the home of Monica Holden, a lady whom Hugh Templeton had never met. And then she went on to expatiate upon Monica's virtues, until there grew up in Templeton's mind an intense and deeply rooted dislike to that lady.

"A horrible woman!" he told Mrs. Whitter; "a woman who has no weaknesses! Weakness is the most desirable thing in woman. What's the good of a woman if she isn't weak? As the poet says, 'If she be not weak to me, what care I how strong she be!'"

"Oh, be quiet, Chrysostom," said Mrs. Whitter, laying a white finger upon his arm. "Of course all women are weak to you! There, there! If they are not, you run away from them. But, my dear child, you had better not make any objection to Ruth's following out the programme of that old lunatic Sir Benjamin. Everyone is decided over it. She must. And really she is rather ill. Don't kick; make love to me quietly until she comes back. I know it's dull, and a twice-told tale, but——"

Templeton moved irritably. "Tom," he said, "don't be a fool." He was more angry and disturbed at the idea than he cared to own, and for reasons other than those that had weighed with Ruth and Lady Templeton. But he could do nothing. Any active objection on his part would only raise suspicion, so, chafing, he remained silent. Sir Raymond thought Hugh's annoyance was highly becoming—a very natural and pretty spirit in a bridegroom. But neither he nor anyone else took his nephew's objections seriously. His behavior was exactly what it ought to be, although his dislike to Trevean as a resting place for Ruth seemed to be disproportionate, and even odd. Trevean was a beautiful place and Monica Holden an admirable companion. So the anxieties of the future bridegroom were smilingly tolerated and his remonstrances treated with a playfulness, half mocking and half sympathetic. Even Ruth herself could not be brought to pay much attention to his disapproval. She seemed to be already living in the future. The doctor's words had opened a new vista to her, and now even in the midst of the struggle of her heart, there seemed to be a hidden indefinable ex-

pectancy: she waited for something—she scarcely knew for what.

“At the end of it all, if you have been obedient, something will happen,” said Sir Benjamin.

“A wedding will happen,” replied common sense.

No, Sir Benjamin had not meant a wedding. Ruth was sure of that. “Something will happen! Something will happen!” She repeated the words over and over again, and from that day Templeton felt with a vague feeling of disquiet that his ascendancy over her was not so complete as usual.

On the following morning she went to Cornwall.

When Ruth had gone, Templeton Manor relapsed into absolute quiet.

Hugh Templeton returned to Claridge’s, and Mrs. Whitter discovered some relations badly in need of her. Vivian Vissian also flitted away to fold his wings in another country house, there to inaugurate the little language. He took with him his paint-box, for he had discovered that in the eyes of an irritated hostess a sketch covered a multitude of fooleries. Sir Raymond occupied himself with the dispute over the right of way at Hadden’s Corner, his plans for the forthcoming wedding, and now and again as an occasional fillip to a quiet country life, a long and detailed letter to the Duchess of Kidderminster. There was always some new philanthropy in which he hoped to interest her.

Philanthropy, as well as fads, is, as Sir Raymond knew well, an important rung in the social ladder. Money will do a great deal, but it will not do everything. Good looks, good breeding, a pretty taste in philanthropy, and in some cases a delicate display of deep but restrained religious feeling, is, among the respectable members of the aristocracy—the only section of humanity in whom the baronet took the least interest—almost omnipotent. Sir Raymond used his knowledge to the best advantage.

All was quiet at Templeton now. Inside the house the silent galleries were left to housemaids, while outside gardeners worked in the sunshine undisturbed.

Chapter Twelve

"Virtue may unlock hell, or even
A sin turn in the wards of heaven
(As ethics of the text book go)
So little men their own deeds know."

FRANCIS THOMPSON

LOVE in all its forms, from the charity that comprehends the Universe, to the passion that isolates the individual, is supremely a maker of the soul. Perhaps that is an over-statement. The soul may exist in embryo, but when the time has come love is certainly the midwife that drags it into conscious being. No human creature may escape love in some form, as no human creature may escape pain; for pain, unless it be mere physical anguish—when it becomes the deepest mystery of God—is simply love under another aspect. So both love and pain are one and inevitable to the race. Only by accepting them and making them our own in the eternal sense are we free of them. And first in love (understood as pain) and then in death lies the renewing of all life.

"Howso great man's strength be reckoned
There are two things he cannot flee
Love is the first and death is the second."

To understand this rightly, and to act on the understanding, is to have conquered the world.

But between the charity that is but another name for the love of God, and the human passion, which is but another name for the love, and the discovery of self, there lies an immense variety of subtle emotions that go to make the color of life. Some millions of these may be included under the word "friendship." That "a man is known by his friends" is doubtful—he is so known to the angels, perhaps, but certainly not so known to his fellow man. Some hidden affinity

may link a saint to a criminal, but in detecting the criminal one does not discover the saint.

And it was some such hidden affinity that accounted for the friendship that had grown up between Rose de Winton and Monica Holden. Rose's weaknesses were obvious; but it was an intuition of a strength that at first in such a person had seemed absurd, that arrested Monica. Rose lived in an emotion that held in it the heroic qualities of sacrifice and endurance. It was like a raft bearing her over unimaginable whirlpools to some safe port in the Blessed Islands. The simile was Monica's, and the result of patience on her part and a keen perception. She knew nothing of the girl's circumstances, but she found in her a pathetic child, ignorant of virtue, learned in vice, with an unlimited capacity for love: therefore from the day when Rose, shivering with cold and burning with fever, had stumbled across old Susan's threshold Monica Holden had been her friend. She had nursed her through the illness that had resulted from that day's experiences, had lent her books and had brought her flowers from her own gardens at Trevean, and all the time she had felt her efforts stultified by a hidden trouble.

Rose's illness had left her weak, so that in the later stages, when she was able to leave her bedroom, the thing that pleased her most was to have her couch pushed into the window, when she would lie still and look out quietly upon the blue sky and the sea flecked with the brown sails of fishing boats.

During these days the sea became her friend. Whenever she listened for it, it was there. At night, waking suddenly, she heard it calling to her, and in the sunny autumn afternoons, in the midst of day dreams, she heard it also. Her life was very empty. A great loneliness had fallen upon her, and if it had not been for Monica, Mrs. Renowden, or Cherry, Rose in her ignorance thought that she might very easily have gone mad. She never went again to visit the witch of Penolver, but she sent the money still owing to her by the hands of Mary Gannet, a village girl who went to consult Meg Doon about her own misfortunes. Rose felt that she could

never go to Penolver again. The visit had been full of horror, and the thought of it became inextricably mixed in her mind with the fantastic imageries of delirium, so that she could now scarcely distinguish between fact and imagination. And although it had held out a hope, in the assurance that one day Templeton would claim her for his own, that seemed in the bare face of present events to be but a will-o'-the-wisp luring her to a destructive happiness. Impatient and undisciplined as she was, her illness had taught her a certain new restraint. Circumstances and the people about her had carried on the education that Templeton had begun. During the first few days she had complained wildly and had thrown herself from side to side of her bed, crying out that her body burned and her head ached. "No one considered her!" she wept! No one paid attention to her sufferings! There spoke Nature, and Grace to check the outcry was lacking. What wonder! Rose had spent an orphaned childhood. No mother had been near to nurse the little ailments, to soothe and to counsel wisely. It was not that Rose refused wisdom; it was rather that she was profoundly ignorant of its meaning.

One day Miss Holden had come to Tremellon with her hands full of autumn crocus and spindle berries, and at the sight of her Rose, without a word of welcome, had turned in her bed abruptly, crying, with her face towards the wall. The elder woman smiled and arranged the flowers that she had brought. Soon Rose raised the corner of the sheet and looked out furtively; her expression, sulky yet expectant, was like that of a naughty child, or an intelligent but disobedient dog. At such moments a curious half animal likeness to Rosalie flitted across her face.

When she had finished her work Miss Holden drew a chair to the bedside, and Rose, finding that she was no longer ignored, became once more aggressive.

"No one has been near me for two hours," she grumbled. "There isn't a living soul who cares if I live or die."

"That thought must make you very unhappy, my dear," said Monica drily. "I am very sorry for you."

Her tone jarred upon Rose's self pity. "Don't *you* care?"

she asked. Her eyes were ready to stream at the thought of her woe.

"I care much more that you should understand how to be happy," returned Monica.

"Happy!" exclaimed Rose. A sudden rush of temper flung her upon her side. "It's all very well for you to talk; you are quite well and have everything you want! I am ill."

"Happiness has nothing to do with feeling ill. The happiest person I know is never out of pain."

"Oh, well," said Rose, "I think that those sort of people are mad, that's all! I—oh, Miss Holden,"—self pity dominated her,—*"I am so lonely! How can I be happy?"*

"Happiness has nothing to do with loneliness!" persisted Monica. Her stern features softened into a radiant charity. Loneliness! Of all forms of suffering, this was the one with which she was the most familiar. "Some day you will understand."

"Why can't I understand now?"

"Because—it is like talking of blueness to a blind man." Monica laughed gently, as she observed the hot hand lying on the counterpane. "You will have to give much more, and suffer much more, before you can understand."

"Give what?"

"Give love, and suffer pain."

"You think——"

"That there is sense in being unhappy? Yes, until you understand—then you are not unhappy any more. But suffering is the stuff on which joy weaves a pattern." The last words were spoken more to herself than to Rose, whose eyelids were now drooping over weary swollen eyes. "Don't talk any more now; lie still, and perhaps you will sleep. Don't allow a restless thought to come into your mind. Nobody can possibly hurt you, you know, but yourself. All these days you have been a worse enemy to yourself than the fever." She rose gently from her chair and lowered the blind, then she returned to the bedside. "There, I will sit here and read. Do what I tell you, and in a little while all the heat and disorder will pass away, and you will rest."

Rose stretched out her hands impetuously. "I don't understand you," she said. "I hate feeling pain, and being ill and lonely. I think," she added slowly, "I hate being alive. I used to love my life, but now I wish so often that I could die. I think sometimes of the day when I shall be dead and quiet and everything will be over and done with for ever. But you are very good to me. I will lie still—I will indeed."

Once more she turned upon her side, and the only sound in the bedroom was the distant rush of the waves upon the shore. After a time Monica laid down her book and looked long at the sleeping girl. Her words had come true: Rose no longer tossed restlessly; she slept, and her limbs relaxed into peace. One arm stretched towards Monica lay partly bared, blue-veined upon the counterpane; the flushed beautiful face was turned away, and the hair tossed gold upon the pillow. Miss Holden speculated upon her history. Rose was in some ways as backward as a little child, in others experienced as an old and evil woman. Concerning her husband she had been entirely reticent.

In the course of a life spent chiefly in helping the unfortunate, Monica Holden had had many dealings with many different classes of people, and this experience helped her now in the direction of the truth. Mrs. Renowden and the Tremelton people would have looked askance, could they have followed the working of her thought. But in spite of Rose's simplicity, which was truly a part of her, she wore at the same time an air, a demeanor—a something—with which Miss Holden in her minute knowledge of certain streets and persons in London had become familiar. As the soul makes of outside things what it will (the lesson that Monica had been endeavoring to impress upon her patient), so also outside things leave their mark for all eternity upon the soul; and Rose lying there upon the bed in her feverish beauty seemed to Monica a strange example of this paradox of the world. She lay there a thing that heredity, environment and circumstances had made, and still a thing with a life that was of her and yet not of her—a soul—imprisoned like a bird in a strange cage, vainly beating against the bars until love

or death should set it free. Poor body, soiled by the touch of many hands! Poor tired beauty, so well worth a kiss! Poor wounded, noble, courageous, woman's soul, struggling painfully and with difficulty towards the light! What can we human creatures make of such a spectacle?

After some time Rose opened her eyes, and meeting those of her friend smiled.

"My headache has gone!" she said, then leaning over the bedside, she kissed Monica's hand impulsively. "And you are still sitting there! How good—how good you are to me!"

Mrs. Renowden's knock at the door stopped Monica's reply. It was tea-time. The landlady entered with the importance that always accompanied her bringing of a meal. She bustled the tray upon a small table at the bedside, and having arranged the tea things to her satisfaction, stepped back to turn her head on one side and view her work. Hot toast for Monica stood on the right of the tea tray, a sponge cake made specially for the invalid on the left. The table was decorated by a branch of autumn violets brought in by Cherry. All was as it should be. Mrs. Renowden turned her attention to Rose.

"And how is the pure lamb to-day?" said she, peering into the girl's face. Mrs. Renowden had by this time entirely forgotten the deference due to her lodger. Rose was always spoken of now as the "pure lamb," or the "pretty burd," as the case might be. "I doant doot but she belongs tu be well next week tu welcome her gentleman home. I doant doot et, that I doant."

All the fresh hope in Rose's face withered. She drew her hand hurriedly across her forehead in a sudden nervous gesture. "Yes," she said, "I shall be well next week—quite well."

Then turning her eyes upon Mrs. Renowden's surprised face, she strove to appear natural. "I am sure Mr. Gray will be home next week. He has had a lot of business to attend to. He—he—has stayed away much longer than he expected to. But he will be back next week. Thank you very much. I shall be quite well then."

Mrs. Renowden retired, and 'as she made her way downstairs her face grew thoughtful.

"Pure lamb!" she said again. "Pure cheeldvean! She've bin more'n a bit bye these last weeks. Well, well, boot she've gat Miss Monica to cheer her naw and thet be mow tu her than she du think. I'd laike to know wheer thet man av hers be jailin' tu! A widdlesome un faaks caal 'ee! An anointed rogue, say I, an' what I du say, I du say, from observation."

It was true that Monica had helped and comforted Rose during her illness in a degree that was as yet scarcely comprehended by the girl herself; but in spite of all that her friend had done, she was constrained by some innate reserve to omit all mention of her in the daily letter to Templeton. Insensibly Monica had begun to stand for another side of Rose's life that was in the midst of her unhappiness beginning to take shape—a side with which her lover was unacquainted and which, through fear of ridicule, she hid from him. Also she did not wish to tell of the circumstances of their meeting; it had taken place now some time ago, and she felt that, whatever happened, her visit to the witch of Penolver must remain a secret. But apart from these facts, difficult to account for, without betraying herself to Templeton, Rose would have found it next to impossible to explain how day by day Monica's influence had gained upon her. She began with difficulty to perceive that a life might be lived according to a plan and free of circumstances. Monica seemed in some strange way to have none of the small troubles—the petty worries, over which Rosalie was wont to call down the heavens; happiness with her, it appeared, had become a condition of being, rather than a phase. *Le bonheur n'est pas un état, c'est un épisode.* Every day of Monica Holden's life disproved that statement. Thus gradually, and sometimes in sudden unexpected flashes, it became dimly manifest to Rose that happiness was indeed, as Monica had said, a thing within the reach of everybody, whatever his surroundings; that life itself was an art, and the difficult virtues only means to an end. It was all extraordinary to her. Her horizon was lifting: the light dazzled her.

"All happiness is contained in yourself,"—so said Monica Holden, and Rose de Winton paused and considered the saying, until her love for Templeton returned upon her shattering the tentative hope and flinging her once more in upon herself. There she strangled as best she might her very heart. Her unhappiness was in herself. True. But it was there fixed and irrevocable: it transcended her: and yet she was herself the center of it. There was no escape from herself. While she lived she loved, and while she loved thus hopelessly she suffered torments, and the joy of life was to her but the echo of a strange song heard from afar off.

Thus she grew to bitter knowledge, and at the same time, against her will, to physical health. Her convalescence established, Monica's visits became less frequent, and when at last she was quite well, it seemed to Rose that she scarcely saw her friend at all. She was inclined to resent the desertion, and brooded upon it jealously, until a sudden premonition of Monica's smile at her meditated upbraidings made her hesitate, until, as the easier and the better way, she fell back once more upon her faith in her friend, established by love and gratitude. This was a small thing compared to the stress of her life's impulse, a leaf retrieved from an irresistible current, but in this, at least, small though it was, pain was saved her—nay, pain was transmuted into strength. But she did not stop to analyze either the emotion itself or the cause of the cure. Psychology had not come into Templeton's scheme for Rose's education.

Still the intolerable days followed one another. Rose had very little with which to occupy her time. She did her lessons regularly, as far as she could, learned strings of dates and read and re-read the poetry that Templeton had especially marked for her. She found it entirely unintelligible. "Heavy as tears and deep almost as life!"—Rose shook her head, as she replaced the book. The words carried no meaning to her. Poetry was certainly a thing beyond the scope of her understanding. Every afternoon she wrote her letter to Templeton and changed the slips of her almanac to anticipate the following day. The almanac now stood at the 12th of October.

It was six weeks since her lover had left her. In the midst of her bitterness Rose recalled the vain words of the clairvoyant, "Seven weeks from the day he be set in the white room, reading to the white lady—seven weeks from this day that be I du see he at Tremellon." Another—only another week to wait! Ah, dear God!—if only the thing had been true! Then the enormous absurdity of the promise struck her, and now like Sarah, unbelieving, she laughed within herself—laughed loudly and painfully at the thought of a dead paradise. "My wife," said Ann Hand. "These be his words." His wife! The time when her imagination had compassed even that improbability had gone by, and she was left still clinging to hope, but facing none the less an empty and stubborn future. But she stood yet upon the threshold of Eden, waiting for the sword to fall that would bar the door for ever.

When time hung upon her too heavily, she took long solitary rambles upon the cliffs. White rabbits peered at her with bright liquid eyes, and then scuttled away, half in fear and half in frolic. The uninterrupted sea lay always at her feet, blue, or else bathed in mist. At these times she was only half conscious of her surroundings. Her inward life absorbed her. Young and thrilling with life, she was now given the solitude of a hermit, without the consolation of an ideal. Shut off from man, and shut off from God, she was thrown back perpetually upon that inward agony that told her she was alive. She longed sometimes to slip away through the mist and fling herself and her grief upon the unrecording bosom of the sea. Her brain worked at the idea until something—a visit perhaps from Monica Holden or a parcel of books—brought her back abruptly into a saner mood.

One day, when she had passed through just such an experience and felt the need of human companionship press upon her more painfully than usual, she strolled out on to the cliff, and half unconsciously turned her footsteps to Trevean. She longed to speak, if only for a moment, to Monica Holden, but she did not like to go into her cottage uninvited. So she took up her position near on a bit of rock, waiting on chance

to give her a sight of her friend, even though the door was shut the house seemed to be empty. At last, however, just as she had lost patience and was shaking out her skirts and stretching her limbs, cramped with long sitting, before going home, a figure appeared in the garden at the side of the house. Her heart jumped and she felt a stir of pleasure, but in a moment even that poor pleasure died away. It was not Monica, but a stranger—a girl of about her own age, or younger. She looked again, for the arrival of a visitor at Trevean was an event. The girl was dressed in a short skirt and coat of white serge, a white knitted Tam o' Shanter on her head. Her hair was brown and grew low upon her temples: she wore it parted in the middle and brushed in thick waves from either side of her face. Her eyes were wide and fearless, and she carried herself, Rose thought, as though the world belonged to her. This air of entire self-possession, although not in itself ungracious, cut her off, it seemed, from the need of sympathy, and in so doing repelled Rose, in whom unconsciously gentleness made a continual appeal for that which unconsciously the younger girl exacted as a right. Her presence filled Rose with a sudden confusion. She felt herself to be strangely unlike the new comer, an inhabitant of a different and an inferior world, the creature of a different set of circumstances. All this passed rapidly through her mind, as, against her will, she drooped her eyes before the fearless gaze of the stranger. The unlikeness was expressed in her dress, which was even more elaborate than usual. Following an old habit, she had put on the first thing that had come to hand, and to-day it happened to be an embroidered silk which, with her large French hat and a parasol, made an odd foil to the severe simplicity of the girl in front of her. The stranger came nearer. She looked friendly, and as she stood still, apparently in expectation of something, Rose felt constrained to speak. She wanted to show that she was not made of inferior earth, that she too was a friend of Monica Holden's, but it was difficult to find her words.

"Are you staying with Miss Holden?" she blurted out. Her shyness fluttered her.

"Yes," said the other unconcernedly. Then with a quick smile. "Do you know her?"

Rose nodded. The self-possession of the other increased her embarrassment. But her companion waited. Evidently she was expected to say more. "She has been very good to me," she added irrelevantly.

"She is good to everybody."

"Are you here for long?"

"For another three weeks. I am supposed to be ill, but did you ever see anyone so strong?" The girl laughed merrily, showing her regular teeth. "I am having what is called a rest cure, but I call it a Trevean cure, for I am kept busy from morning till night. And you?" She stole a glance at her questioner. "You are staying in these parts too?"

"I am at Tremellon."

"Where is that?"

"About two miles off."

Rose said no more, and again there was a silence. On her side Ruth Templeton felt a dawning interest in her interlocutor. Who could she be? She was a friend of Monica's, but she was so strangely dressed, in a manner befitting a princess or an actress. That she was neither was testified to by her entire want of self-possession. She had bad manners, very bad manners, but the appeal in her voice would not be denied. Ruth was attracted by it.

"Are you staying at Tremellon alone?" she asked, wondering.

"I—my husband is away at present." Rose flushed darkly. She had lost control of her tears and even standing before a stranger, her eyes filled.

The attraction she held for Ruth strengthened—reinforced by curiosity. There was some story connected with this beautiful, pathetic girl. Inadvertently Ruth had laid her hand upon a trouble. Monica Holden would know all about it. "But," she thought, "how odd of her to show her feelings like that to a passing stranger!"

"I am so glad that you know Miss Holden," went on Ruth pleasantly to cover Rose's embarrassment; "won't you come

and have tea with us one day while I am here! I have to ask you myself, because however much Miss Holden may want to she daren't invite anyone because of this absurd rest cure of mine. I am forbidden to see my old friends and to receive letters, but I don't suppose I should be forbidden to make a new acquaintance. I am to become detached, if you know what that means." Again she laughed. "When ivy is pulled off a wall it is detached. I don't think I am succeeding very well, though."

Rose looked at her with puzzled eyes. She had never met anybody like this before.

"I should like to come to tea very much," she replied at last, speaking slowly. "I get very lonely here with nobody to talk to all day. Sometimes I feel that I cannot bear it, and that it will drive me mad."

It was now Ruth's turn to be embarrassed. She was not accustomed to such alarming frankness. There were no gradations in Rose's direct statements: she went straight to the point and in one sentence tore the veil from her heart, and displayed it to the stranger. But Ruth preferred not to look. "Of course Tremellon is a very quiet little place," she said, speaking in a matter of fact voice; "you will probably like it much better when your husband joins you." She felt years older now than the woman in front of her and fully competent, if need be, to advise her.

But Rose, chilled by her tone, fell back upon conventionality. "Oh, yes," she said, "I shall like it very much then, I think." Mentally she resolved to be on her guard with strangers in the future. To some people (the class whom Rosalie designated as the "stuck-up") it was evidently a sin to speak the truth. She must be on guard with such people.

"When shall I come to tea with you?" she asked by way of turning the conversation.

Ruth nearly laughed. Her innocent question had clinched a careless invitation. "Will you come to-morrow?" she said kindly.

"Thank you." Rose lifted her frilled parasol and prepared to go.

"But," continued the other, "I want to tell Miss Holden that you are coming, and I don't know your name."

"My name is Mrs. Gray."

Ruth could not have imagined a more unlikely name. "Mrs. Gray!" she repeated in astonishment. "Mrs. Gray!"

"Why not? Isn't it an ordinary name?" Rose laughed faintly. "What is yours?"

Why, she could not tell, but a strange half-fearful presage thrilled her heart as she asked that question. Was it her inmost soul, that dweller in eternity, who, knowing all things, shrank before the future, or did she feel from far off the stir of that shuttle that now for the first time gathered two destinies upon one woof to weave from henceforward but one pattern? She was barely conscious of her fear, but unwittingly she shivered. Ruth noticed the movement.

"Are you cold? Your dress is rather thin for so late in the afternoon."

"No," Rose laughed nervously. "It is nothing. When one shivers for nothing, isn't it said that somebody is walking over one's grave? But you have not told me your name."

"My name is Ruth Templeton."

Thus was the weaving commenced, and the fibers of Rose's heart were touched the first. At the very outset, the pain sickened her. Templeton! There could be but one Templeton.

"Do you come from Templeton in Hertfordshire?" she cried quickly.

"Yes, that is my home. Do you know it?"

Pain ran like fire through Rose's limbs; it seemed to seize her brain, blot out her vision, and turn the sea and sky to blackness. For a moment she swayed like a drunken woman. Then a voice frank and sweet penetrated the fog.

"What is the matter? I am afraid that you are ill."

Rose could find no words. She put out a cold hand, feeling that some reply was necessary in action if not in speech. It was grasped by a hand warm and kind and strong, and at the same time she felt an arm slipped round her waist supporting her.

"You are very ill. You must come in to the cottage at once."

"No, no." Her tongue was free at last and the dark eyes lifted. Once more she could speak and see. She wrenched herself away from the protecting arm. "I was a little faint. Thank you very much indeed. I bathed for too long this morning. It is too late in the year to bathe. It is almost autumn. Thank you, I must be getting home." She held out her hand. "Good-by, Miss——"

"Templeton," said Ruth. "Good-by, but do take care. You don't look at all strong—I do not think I ought to let you go like this, and I am quite sure you ought not to be allowed to bathe at all. Come early to-morrow, I shall make Miss Holden prescribe for you. Good-by."

Rose turned and walked away quickly. And as she went she found the word Templeton was written on the sea, the sky, the moor. There was no getting away from it. Templeton! Templeton! Templeton!

Who was this girl? What was her relation to her lover? Time alone could bring Rose the answer, but Time was cruelly slow.

Chapter Thirteen

"To know self and overcome it, to know the law and obey it—this is the sum of righteousness."—DRESSER.

RUTH TEMPLETON watched the departing figure curiously. "What a queer girl! What a dress! What a hat! Does she put on satin and diamonds when she sits in her cottage in the evening!"

She recounted the adventure to Miss Holden. "I have invited her to tea to-morrow," she said.

Ruth was quick in her decision, and Monica was for the moment startled. Sir Raymond Templeton and his rigid propriety filled her mental vision. She had his daughter now under her charge. What kind of a friend was this that she was about to give her!

She knew nothing of Rose Gray, but she surmised much. Then she considered that Ruth was Elizabeth's child also and could take Rose at another valuation than that of the world, and her face cleared.

"Very well," she said. "I hope you will like her."

"Do *you* like her, Aunt Monica?"

"Very much. I am sorry for her. I think she is unhappy."

"So do I."

Ruth busied herself about lighting the lamps, for the day was closing in and both she and Monica tried to save the labor of their little maid as much as possible.

When the blinds were drawn and the fire poked into a flame Ruth drew a low stool near to her friend and laid a cheek against her knee. Undemonstrative usually, Monica knew now that she had something to say.

"Well, dear, what is it?"

"Do you think that Sir Benjamin would be pleased at the result of the rest cure?"

"He would be a hard man to please if he were not. You are a different creature. You have only been here for a week and you have pink cheeks and bright eyes. You eat and sleep and laugh. You are getting quite plump. What more do you want?"

Ruth hesitated until the silence between them forced an answer.

"Aunt Monica, I want to go home!"

Miss Holden was possessed of an enormous patience where large issues were concerned, but irresponsibility sometimes drew from her a sharp rebuke. She now checked the words on her lips, for she was too fond of Ruth to hurt her.

"My dear child," she said kindly, "you have only been here for a week." She laid a hand upon the thick brown hair. "What is worrying you now?"

"Nothing is worrying me exactly, but I want to go home. I want to go home most dreadfully," she concluded abruptly. "I want to see Hugh."

"Of course you do! That is only natural. But he knows that your rest cure is to last for a month. If he loves you he would be very angry with you for running off to see him before it was completed."

Ruth shook her head.

"Oh, no, he would not. You don't know Hugh, Aunt Monica. Nothing would give him greater pleasure." But she hated even to appear to discuss her lover, and hesitated. "I did not mean that in any disparaging sense," she said, as though to atone for the remark. "How could I? Aren't all men like that?"

"No," said Monica abruptly. "Not all, or if they are they pretend they aren't. But tell me, does not he want you to get better?"

"He wants me to get better, but he disliked my coming down here. You can't imagine how strongly he objected to Cornwall, and he said that it was at the end of the world."

"You would have been as much at the end of the world in a nursing home!"

"He did not think so. He implored me to go into a nursing home."

"Rubbish. He must be a very unreasonable person!"

"I wish you knew him, Aunt Monica!"

"Would that make me think him more reasonable?"

"No, but it might make you think me more reasonable!"

Miss Holden altered her tone.

"I don't want to keep you here against your will. But I thought that you were enjoying our quiet life."

"Oh, I am! I am!" cried Ruth fervently. "I love the sea and the moor and the people here. I have enjoyed every minute of it. I was in a shocking state of rumpled nerves when I arrived. How you could have borne with my low spirits I cannot think."

Monica laughed. If Ruth had been suffering from depression on her arrival, she had disguised it successfully; she seemed now to be the embodiment of frank happiness.

"You shook off your miseries pretty quickly," she said, "for I never saw them."

"The people at home did," replied Ruth. "I drove Hugh nearly mad with my fears and suspicions. A nightmare of doubt had fallen over me. I cannot think where it came from. I doubted everybody's goodness, even Mrs. Whitter's, and the Duchess's, and father's, even Hugh's! That shows how ill I was!"

"Did you doubt Robert Treling?"

"No, I did not doubt him, but he exasperated me somehow. I hated everything he did. I hated the way he looked and walked. I hated his way of saying things."

"Poor Robert! And your mother?" A half scornful smile twitched Monica's lips. She could realize that it might be exceedingly possible to doubt the impeccability of Mrs. Whitter and Sir Raymond—even that of the Duchess—even that of Hugh (whom she did not know)—but of Elizabeth? She wondered what her daughter would say.

"Mother!" Ruth looked surprised. "How could anyone doubt mother? I made her unhappy, though. I could not—tell her—about things. But it is Hugh of whom I am thinking

especially! Oh, Aunt Monica, I am longing to get back to him to say that I am sorry for all my foolishness. Everything looks so different now."

"Everything looks different now, does it? Isn't that what Sir Benjamin said would happen?"

"Ye-e-s," replied Ruth slowly. "He did, and that is why I want to go home. That part of my cure is finished anyhow."

"That part! Is there any other part?"

Ruth changed her position, threw back her head with a little amused laugh. "There is another part—such a funny part—Sir Benjamin said—you will scarcely believe it, Aunt Monica. Mother says it is one of those things that make people call him a crank—he said——" She stopped short.

"Well, what did he say? You rouse my curiosity, my dear."

"He said that when my cure was over I should be so strong mentally and physically that I should be longing to use my strength, and that when that happened there was always a way in which one could. 'There is always something,' he said; 'you will find out what it is for yourself.' Wasn't that an odd idea?"

"I don't know," returned Miss Holden. "We do determine our circumstances more or less by our attitude towards them—about as much as that attitude is itself determined by other circumstances," she added in a low voice. "Well, my dear,"—her tone changed briskly—"stay here and discover this something for yourself. You cannot disobey your doctor and your parents and your own good sense by running away. You see we have come back to where we were at the beginning of our talk."

"I know," said Ruth. "I know quite well, but——"

"But?"

"I mistrusted Hugh," said Ruth. "I am ashamed. He is incapable of anything but the highest honor. He does not look at life in my way, but he looks at it in a man's way—that is all. I am longing to go back and tell him from my heart how absolutely I believe in him! And I want to tell him at the same time that it was my weakness that raised the

barrier between us. I think I have become humble," she added after a pause.

"It is a woman's glory to be humble before the man she loves," said Monica, "but only when she knows that his love is equal to her own. The faintest shadow of a doubt is enough to destroy humility and set her upon a pinnacle of pride; that is her only refuge."

"I have no doubt now," said Ruth. "It has gone like a shadow; that is why I am well. Oh, Aunt Monica, I can't tell you how happy I am. I can hardly speak about it. I feel that I have got the greatest thing in the world. I can never be the same again."

"Then indeed it is time for something to happen," said Monica.

"And don't you see that it is just this change in me that makes it difficult for me to remain here now?" said Ruth. "I want to talk to Hugh so much. I want to tell him everything. It is only since I have been here that I have learned to love him. I was foolish—frightened at Templeton. It all happened so quickly, it was like a dream. I didn't know then what love meant. I know now. It means everything. There was a struggle in me then. I don't know why. That is over now. I belong to him absolutely. Any strength or goodness I may have will come to me now through my love for him and his love for me. Oh, Aunt Monica, I feel ready for anything now."

"Well, then, be ready to remain here for another three weeks. You can employ yourself by making friends with that poor miserable lonely little Rose at Tremellon. Fate has thrown her into your arms, so do your best for her."

"And *not* go home! Oh, Aunt Monica!"

"Of course not go home! You were to stay here for a month. Why should you go flying off like this for a whim? You have changed your point of view; there will be time enough to tell Mr. Templeton that in another three weeks. Be sensible, my dear, it is clearly your duty to remain."

Ruth sat silent. She had no more to say. She had put her case and Monica had judged it. She sat with her face turned

away, stung to a decision. The elder woman watched her. There was but one end to this struggle, and Monica knew well what that would be. All Ruth's education had tended towards self-discipline. She would obey!

At last her pose relaxed. Her mind was made up. She turned suddenly and, bending, kissed Monica in token of her submission.

"Good, dear child!" said Miss Holden, patting her cheek.
"You deserve to be happy!"

Chapter Fourteen

"Is it the all severest mode,
To see ourselves with the eyes of God?
God rather grant at His assize,
He sees us not with our own eyes."

FRANCIS THOMPSON

THE next morning Ruth was unprecedentedly late for breakfast. The kettle hissed on the fire; the bacon frizzled. A cheerful breakfast smell, mixed with that of autumn roses,—a great bowl of which stood upon the cottage table,—pervaded the room. Outside, the wind tore madly over the moor, bending tall grasses and low bushes before it, and knocking foam from distant breakers out at sea. Trevean bore with many a boisterous day that raced over the head of quiet little Tremellon, sheltered by its high cliffs.

Miss Holden looked out of the window at the storm. It reminded her of that day, more than six weeks ago, when at old Susan's cottage she had first become acquainted with her friend Rose Gray, of Tremellon. Since then, the usual winds had been less frequent, and the country was still green under the influence of soft rain, sunshine, and gentle breezes.

"What a storm, Aunt Monica!"

Miss Holden looked away from the window to the girl at her side. She was paler than on the preceding day.

"Have you slept well, dear?"

Ruth had already decided that her obvious weariness must be accounted for. "When I bragged of my recovery yesterday, Aunt Monica, I should have said '*unberufen*.' I didn't even knock wood, and the result is, that I dreamt all night."

Miss Holden sympathized, but it appeared as though the tea-pot occupied most of her thoughts.

"You know," continued Ruth, "that there was—some—

thing that upset me at Templeton, just before I came here—a séance of Robert's with that poor mad creature, Ann Hand. Did mother tell you about it?"

Yes, Monica had heard, but she was more annoyed than Ruth knew that the thing had recurred to her in this way.

"Two teaspoonfuls," she said absently, "and one for the pot. There, that is all right!"

"Do listen, Aunt Monica," said Ruth; "it all came back to me last night so vividly. But the strange thing was that while I saw Ann Hand, I, myself, was part of her dream—I and you, and father, and mother, and Hugh, and even that odd girl I met yesterday on the cliffs. It was too absurd. It seemed that we walked round one another blindfold, in endless circles, and that some hidden Thing laughed at us. It was horrible. Everything was dim and uncertain. We were a procession of helpless people, with outstretched hands. Because we couldn't see, we listened, but the only sound was the dreadful silent chuckle of the Thing that held us, and that knew, somehow, *why* we were there, and what it was that we were doing. I can't describe it. It was most horrible. I woke up, shivering with fright. My forehead was wet, and the tears were pouring down my cheeks, on to my ears and neck. Then I lit a candle, and read for the rest of the night."

Miss Holden listened quietly to Ruth's story, as though all her guests were in the habit of relating similar experiences.

"I am so sorry, dear," she said at last: "but there is really nothing so good as breakfast for dispelling night visions. Let me give you some bacon."

"It seemed to be so much more than a mere dream," said Ruth; "while they last, these things are extraordinarily real, aren't they?"

"Until you break into them with the Material. I took a small boy once to the theater, and when the play became too tragic to be borne, he broke the illusion with a peppermint cream that he had kept by him for the purpose."

"I am more weak-minded than that small boy," said Ruth. "I am still under the influence of my illusion. What can I have to take the place of the peppermint cream?"

Miss Holden considered her reply, and then, braving the scowls of an imaginary Sir Raymond, she ventured it.

"Why should you not go and see Rose Gray, at Tremellon. She is not at all dream-like. Her substantial flesh and blood, and general matter-of-factness, would be enough to dispel any bogies. And really, dear, I should be most grateful if you would go. I find that I cannot have her to tea after all, for I have to journey into Penzance, to see a girl that I have placed in a situation there, who threatens to cut her throat, and run away. I am not sure that I shan't let her do it in the end, if she wants to, for she is incorrigible; but anyhow, I must see her to-morrow. So please tell Rose to come another day."

"She will be very disappointed," said Ruth. "I never before saw anybody so glad at being asked to tea. What a mysterious person she is!"

"Go and see her," replied Monica; "the mystery will vanish at close quarters. You won't dream about her any more."

As Miss Holden had suggested, the power of breakfast was irresistible. Ruth's phantoms of the night slipped gradually back into the gray world. She pulled on her coat, and knitted cap, and, stick in hand, made for Tremellon. She could hardly walk against the wind: it wrapped round her, hit her this way and that, and with each buffet her spirits rose. Scarcely able to breathe, and with tingling ears, she grew ashamed of her morbid fancies. The wind whirled above and beneath her, rushing over the earth, and sweeping over the heavens. The sea was no less active, shouting to it wildly from below, gathering up pebbles and seaweed, and tossing them right and left in a passionate frenzy of motion. Ruth strode on, strengthened by the tumult, at one with both wind and sea. The wild exultation of the duet intoxicated her. She opened her arms, and flung herself back, as though upon a strong support. The wind blew her hair upon her face, and scattered her clothes. She drew in deep breaths of it, and inhaled the saltiness of the sea. Ruth's cure was complete: she felt a different being, buffeted into joyful sanity. At last, with bright hot

cheeks and dishevelled hair, she stopped at Mrs. Renowden's cottage.

Cherry opened the door, and seeing Miss Templeton, dropped a respectful courtesy. She knew, of course, who the visitor was. Everybody at Tremellon knew Ruth, and what she ate, and what she wore. She had only been at Trevean for a week, but both Trevean and Tremellon knew her clothes, and the number of frills upon her petticoats, for those had been given out to Mary Gannet to wash, and she had pronounced them to be very good, but not much to show for the time and money that had been spent upon them. So now Cherry courtesied and blushed like a summer apple, and Ruth laughed at her confusion and her prettiness. She inquired for Mrs. Gray, and that made Cherry laugh again, for Mrs. Gray was at home, but she was still in bed, and this, at eleven o'clock in the morning, struck Cherry as the greatest joke of all. Perhaps Miss Templeton would wait. Cherry bubbled over, as she asked the question.

"Mrs. Gray du belong tu be dune sune naw, and she'd hurry proper, ef she knawed a lady had coaled to visit she." So spoke Cherry, and Ruth agreed to wait, for she felt suddenly tired after her contention with the elements. All was so quiet here. After the tumult on the high cliffs, the stillness was uncanny; there was no breeze, the fuchsia even did not bend its head. The reaction produced in Ruth a sleepy languor, and she half closed her eyes, as she followed Cherry into the little passage.

"Tell Mrs. Gray not to hurry," she said; "I am very tired, I shall be glad of a rest."

Cherry laughed again at the bare idea of being tired at such an hour of the morning, and opening the door of Rose's sitting-room, ushered in Miss Templeton. Then she closed it softly, and carried her merriment with her down the passage.

Ruth stood still in the middle of the room. She hardly looked at it. She was very weary, and a certain atmosphere hung about the place that muffled her brain, it seemed, and dazed her. The contrast was complete between this and the high cliffs. Here, in the midst of a fresh turbulent wind,

was a certain scented, enervating air, preserved by a room and four walls. Ruth passed her hand across her eyes, and it was suddenly as though she had been brought face to face with all that she most dreaded—all the doubt, and fear and horror of the last few weeks. What did it mean? The double life of her dream returned to her. She was indeed in this strange room, standing on its soft carpet, with her hands resting limply on the edge of the table, and yet she was in her dream of the night before, taking part in that blind procession. The old terror pressed upon her, but she felt a powerlessness to cry out. From that, vaguely, and in the manner of dreams, she drifted back to Templeton, and felt another fear, the strange dread of Hugh, the misery and the indecision of her attitude towards him; then back, back, to that day at the lodge, the séance and Ann Hand. Once more she saw the bright room at Templeton, with the sun streaming through the latticed window, on to the white distorted face. Once more, she saw Robert Trelling's bent back, his brown skin, and eager eyes. Then as in a dream within a dream, she felt, rather than heard, Ann Hand's words fall with a strange distinctness upon her heart. It was as if a clear voice, not herself, had again spoken them.

"I see a room," said the voice, "cliffs and the sea du show beyont the open window."

Instinctively Ruth looked around her, and a sudden burst of sunshine revealed a primrose cliff on a gray sky. The voice continued with little characteristic turns of phrase, strangely matter-of-fact in its sing-song dialect. "A deal of furniture du belong tu the room. The furniture be coovered with some stoof that sheens; there be big flures and birds apon it." Ruth moved about the room, as though still in her dream, and laid a hand upon the chintz covering of the sofa. She outlined with her fingers the red roses, the birds, and the tiny blue veronica that made up the pattern. Then the fear returned upon her. It seemed as though all the experiences of the last few months, indeed all the experiences of her life, were but preliminaries to some supreme moment brought nearer to her by every passing second. She made an effort

to free herself from the dream, but it closed upon her like a vice of iron, and held her waiting.

Then she got up and crossed to the fireplace. She noticed the white basket chair, covered also with the same flowery chintz—the silver ornaments upon the sideboard, the profusion of flowers everywhere, some dead, and others dying, for Rose did not change their water very often, and Mrs. Renowden was forbidden to touch them. She noticed Rose's work-basket lying on a side table, and piles of illustrated papers and novels. Then, pushed away upon a shelf, she noticed a little pile of books—"Green's History of the English People," "The Dialogues of Plato," "Butler and Lang's Translation of the Odyssey," "Wordsworth's Sonnets," and "The Story of the Plants," by Grant Allen. By the side of these lay an almanac.

Still Ruth wandered round. She paused by the writing table, where sheets of untidy blotting-paper showed inky impressions scored and scored across, dim ghosts of old letters imprisoned here, and dimly discernible. Ruth sat down on the chair before the writing table, and with double power, it seemed, the strange forebodings returned to her.

"What is it?" she said aloud, thankful for the sound of her own voice. "Am I going mad—or what?" She felt like a mouse in a trap, held down by some unknown force, and, like the mouse, knew only that she was the sport of unknown gods—and helpless.

Suddenly her eye was arrested by a glint of sunshine upon silver. She looked, and her heart stood still. A silver frame contained the photograph of a man—a man she knew well. Her breathing stopped; waves of sensation ran through her body to her finger tips. Then the old terrors, wrought to a tremendous climax, rushed upon her, and she felt that she would sink under the onslaught. But instead of crushing her, they bore her up, it seemed, and she felt herself free of them, free to indulge in a mordant curiosity. The photograph was that of Hugh Templeton. She studied it carefully. There was the modelled cheek, full of subtle curves, the strong neck and chin, the small mustache hiding the sensual and ironic

mouth, the black eyes, with the full clear lids, the open forehead, that which long ago had looked to her, in the adoration of her first love, as though some god had laid a hand upon it. What was this photograph doing on Mrs. Gray's writing table? Why did she not display her own husband's photograph, instead of that of a stranger? A stranger! How did this woman, so unlike herself, come to know Hugh Templeton? Intuition, the feminine sixth sense, struck at the truth, but it was held in check, first by habitual nobility of character, aided by training, then by faith allied to reason. Ruth believed in Hugh, she had no cause for doubting his honor. Still there was the photograph! How did it get there? Mrs. Gray heard yesterday that Ruth was a Templeton; why did she not confess then to her acquaintance with Ruth's cousin? Whom did Mrs. Renowden and Cherry think the photograph represented? Had Hugh ever visited this house? Cherry would know. Ruth moved to the bell. There could be no harm in asking Cherry. She grasped the cord, and as she did so, she knew in a sudden flash that, whatever Cherry might tell her, she had reached the truth. She dropped it, and shuddered. Then fiercely she denied her instinct. She would not harbor a thought so base. She was mad—unhinged by Ann Hand's vision. Yes, she was mad. Templeton was a great friend of this Mrs. Gray—he was no more! Perhaps he had helped her in her mysterious trouble. Perhaps! Perhaps! She was racked by doubt, but she knew now that in spite of everything, she could never summon Cherry. No, her second thought was the true one, and come what might, she would never question a living creature about Hugh Templeton.

Hark! what was that? Someone was moving overhead. Rose Gray! Rose Gray, who displayed the photograph of Ruth's lover upon her writing table—Rose Gray, the close friend of Hugh Templeton—Rose Gray, her rival (she flinched at her own abasement), her possible rival! The footsteps stopped; the bedroom door shut; there was a rustle of silk upon the stairs. Soon Ruth Templeton would be face to face with this Rose Gray. She stood motionless, holding the photograph in her hand, and in her heart, an immense and

potent hatred. The rustle continued. It ceased. There was a moment's pause, and then the door opened.

There upon the threshold stood Rose Gray. She wore an orange wrapper, veiled in gauze, and fastened at the waist by a great golden clasp, set with five opals; a string of the same stones was wound about her neck, and fell in loops to the supple waist. The gown was caught together low on her neck, emphasizing the rise of the swelling breast. A faint scent of orris root hung on the rustle of her skirts. The vivid flame color of the silk took the yellow from her hair, leaving it burnt and russet; her skin, it blanched to ivory, but her lips, tinted in rose, defied its might. She was most beautiful this morning; she was strange, but not out of place here in her own surroundings, as she had been yesterday upon the high cliffs. Her lips were parted in a welcome, and a smile shone from her eyes. She was glad to meet her visitor. Ruth stared at her, fascinated. She was unlike anything she had ever seen before. She had known smart women, to whom dressing was the most important thing in life, but they had not the force, the abandon of Rose Gray. Every line of her body made itself felt; every delicate shade of color told warm and vivid. Ruth's hatred stirred within her, pierced now with an itching curiosity, and at the same time,—larger because of that curiosity,—a desire to subdue this creature, whose beauty mocked her. Yesterday, upon the cliffs, it was Rose Gray who had stood abashed; now, it was the highly bred, highly educated proud Miss Templeton, who felt like an awkward child. What did Ruth Templeton know of the forces that had gone to make Rose Gray? What emotions had curved that delicate mouth, what unknown fires had burnt the color upon that warm and wonderful flesh. Her ignorance fanned her hatred into a fiercer flame, and she did not combat it. In that second, while Rose stood thus upon the threshold, all the primitive passions of primitive humanity sprang to life in Ruth Templeton's heart, and burnt the barriers set by religion, environment, and early training.

Ruth Templeton, carefully reared, carefully instructed, fresh from an atmosphere of peace and of prayer, was filled

with a wild jealousy, that would have asked no better gift of Fate than the dead body of her rival. Such is the nature of woman. Day by day the head of John the Baptist on a charger is demanded and delivered, while Mercy and Justice stand aloof, with hidden faces. Thus Ruth Templeton, the last product of Evolution, the cultivated lady, with good brain, large heart, and wide sympathies, whose every moment had been ordered wisely, stood in relentless anger, before a flimsy creature dragged from the gutter, educated only by her physical desires, who knew no law but her own longing, whose body was the one weapon with which she might fight a hostile world, and which she would use ruthlessly in the unequal battle, until it dropped, broken, to be trampled under foot, or flung with loathing out of sight.

Ruth could have afforded to be magnanimous, had she known all, but cruelty is blind as death: jealousy is cruel as the grave.

Rose was the first to realize the situation. She saw the photograph in the other's hands—the photograph of a Templeton, held by a Templeton, and as she looked from it to the face above, she felt that concentrating hatred scorch and wither her. She flinched, and withdrew her eyes. What had she done to inspire such anger? Her spirit rose in rebellion, returning scorn for scorn. She held herself proudly, folded her hands, and waited. No greeting passed between the two. Nature at such a moment can conquer conventionality, but soon the prolonged silence between them became as difficult as a set phrase. Rose was the first to break it.

"Why have you come here?"

Ruth did not reply at once. She laid the photograph upon the table.

"You did not hear my name for the first time last night," she said.

"No."

"Why did you not say so? Why did you pretend?"

"I pretended nothing."

Ruth laid a hand upon the photograph. "I have surprised a secret, then. This is my cousin."

Rose drew a deep breath. She half closed her eyes. Every vestige of color had left her face. She was possessed now by the desire to retaliate—to justify herself—to hit something somehow, regardless of what might follow. The contempt of the other, added to the fear that Templeton had indeed left her, goaded her into madness. She was desperate now, with the recklessness of a timid, gentle creature, who, in sight of death, turns and faces the pursuer. She, too, laid a trembling inert hand upon the photograph.

"You have surprised no secret. This—is my husband." The words were whispered.

There was silence. From the open window came the regular sound of the sea—the roar of marching waves, followed by the rush of an indrawn swirl.

Ruth met the assertion in frosty contempt. Her lips were curled, an ineffable disdain—supreme and masterly—shone in her eyes.

"I do—not—believe—you, Mrs. Gray," she said slowly, laying a biting emphasis upon the name. "You have lied to me. Do you mean me to understand that my cousin is your husband, under an assumed name? I do not believe you. Mr. Templeton is to be married very shortly to a woman—of his own class."

The words sank like vitriol into Rose's soul, although the sneer contained in them was lost upon her. "Of his own class!" Ruth Templeton had not scrupled to use a base weapon, but the magnificence of Rose's grief held her above its reach. Suddenly, Ruth drew away her scarf, as though the fringe might inadvertently touch the girl in front of her, and become infected by the contact.

"Stand aside, please," she said, "I would like to pass!"

Rose stood on one side. She saw the movement, but it did not touch her now. In one moment her soul had died within her, killed by its own bitterness. She judged Ruth no longer, but she little knew the cause Ruth had for jealousy.

Then the door shut, and she was alone. She stood still, clasping her hands, digging the nails into the white knuckles. Then she swayed, and dropped. For a moment, she lay where

she fell, until, like a wounded beast she dragged herself across the carpet, into a corner, and crouched, huddled to the wall. Her breath came hard; the silk of her dress was pulled tightly round her; her opals made spots of fire on her white throat. Her eyes were dry, and dumb, wide open in a staring agony.

Chapter Fifteen

Keep thine hand upon me lest I do thee harm.

S. PHILIP NERI

AND yet Rose de Winton loved Hugh Templeton. She adored him as the religious soul adores his God, and even as he slew her, she trusted in him. Some women and some dogs love in this way. Reason has nothing to say to such an impulse. It is not admirable, neither is it despicable, but as a passion disinterested and immense, it demands consideration.

When the first few moments of her agony had spent themselves, thoughts came crowding in upon Rose's mind. Why had she lied? Would her lie hurt Templeton? Would he hear of it—and loathe her? This brought a new torture. She pictured his reception of such a statement; she pictured the icy contempt, the disgust with which he would fling her off. Her one moment of pride had proved an expensive one. And well it might. What had she to do with pride? Pride was a passion for free women, and not for creatures such as Rose—the instrument of men's pleasure. She had struck at a free woman and the free woman would break her for her daring. Break her! Was she not broken enough already? It seemed as though her life ebbed with every breath, and that blood, not sweat, stood out upon her forehead. She grew dazed with the hurrying faces of her thoughts, but behind them all her love for Templeton stood steadfast, urging her to reparation. From the tumult a resolve shaped itself. For Templeton's sake, his cousin should know the truth. She did not want to anger Templeton. She did not want to hurt him. Hurt him! Dear God, she loved him!

She pulled herself on to unsteady feet and dragged herself up the stairs and into her bedroom. There was an odd taste of salt in her mouth. Her hands were cold and her head hot.

It seemed as though burning sand lay behind her eyelids. Her limbs were weak and inclined to a strange new irresponsibility. For a time her mind became a blank. She undid her dress and pushed it down upon the ground. She looked vaguely for her night things. Then she paused. Why was she going to bed like this in the middle of the morning? She pressed her hands upon her hot forehead. Ah, she had forgotten; she had only come upstairs to change her dress. She sank for a moment upon a chair and struggled to regain conscious thought. Then her brain cleared. Quietly she stood up, opened her wardrobe and chose a skirt and a straw hat. She dressed herself and did her hair in a different style to suit the hat. Whatever happened she would look her best. She was going to confess that she was not only a liar, but the sort of person that Miss Templeton would describe as a "bad woman." Yes, that was the word! Bad! She was bad through and through—rotten to the core as her mother had been before her. Mr. Templeton had tried to improve her. He had taught her out of his great goodness and his great knowledge, but it had all failed. He had condescended to her wonderfully; she had been allowed to call him by his Christian name. Now it was all over. She was a failure. She had repaid his goodness by a lie that might do him incalculable harm. She would undo it if she could. But she must be properly dressed. She wondered if earrings would be out of place with a short skirt. She hesitated, but in the end decided on some small pearl drops that Templeton had given her. She pulled them through her ears, tied on a veil and with one more glance at herself in the looking glass passed down the stairs and out of the cottage.

She scarcely noticed the two miles that lay between Tremelton and Trevean. She walked quickly, repeating explanatory words and phrases as she went along—she had a difficult task to accomplish and she wished to make her meaning as clear as possible.

Miss Templeton herself opened the door. When she saw her visitor she stiffened to rigidity.

"May I speak to you?"

"Is it absolutely necessary?"

"I have something to tell you." Rose looked at her with honest eyes.

Miss Templeton led the way into the sitting room; an unapproachable atmosphere emanated from her; the tones of her voice came from a distance. Rose felt a sense of indescribable remoteness, and this was what Miss Templeton had intended. She was pale and her face was set in new lines. She too had fought a battle since her visit to Tremellon, but her anger had survived the conflict. Rose felt it now like a stinging wind and flinched before it.

"I told you a lie this morning."

"Yes," returned Miss Templeton, "I knew it." But even as she spoke her face quivered into relief. Had she indeed been so sure? "How did you get the photograph? The truth this time, please."

She was ashamed of her words, and her shame showed itself in insolence.

Rose was puzzled. "How did I get it? I don't understand." He gave it to me, of course. He was living with me at Tremellon, but we were not married."

Miss Templeton had asked for the truth, and the truth now that she had it was crueler than the lie. In fighting a lie there is always hope; a contention with the truth brings nothing but despair. No words were possible to her now. Silence dropped upon her, and in that silence she felt the test of all her strength. Was this the fulfillment of Sir Benjamin's prophecy?

Rose continued quickly, eager to justify her vow.

"There is nothing to blame Mr. Templeton for," she said, stammering. "I am to blame. He never meant to marry me. I told you a lie because I was angry. I thought you despised me. Mr. Templeton was bound to marry a lady in his own set, not a girl like me. I can't even talk like him, and I don't really understand about honor and education and all that—the honor and education of ladies and gentlemen, I mean—I—I want him to get married if—if he wants to. I don't want—oh, I can't go on—don't you see?" She stopped.

Ruth's mingled emotions were checked now by a growing wonder as in these few passionate words the girl in front of her set free her heart. Ruth's rigidity dropped before her blank astonishment.

"What do you mean by saying that Mr. Templeton is not to blame?" she repeated incredulously. "If what you tell me is true, I think that he is very much to blame."

"No, no, no!" Rose spoke with the naïveté of a little child. "I cannot tell you how good he has been to me. He took me away from mamma and all that horrible life, he taught me——"

"Taught you!"

"Oh, yes, he taught me history and poetry and morals."

"Morals!" If Ruth's pain had been tempered by astonishment, astonishment was suddenly broken into by an abrupt and ghastly humor. She laughed out loud—a hard and dismal laugh, but one forced by the tickle of an idea. This was some devil's joke that Fate was playing upon her. Her mother had held back from her a part of life. Life itself had now become her instructor. For all that she had borne she could not help her laughter.

"What do you mean by morals?" Against her will her tone was less severe.

"Right and wrong," said Rose simply. "I never thought that they mattered before I knew Mr. Templeton. I never thought of anything but having a good time. When I came to live with him he scolded me when I did wrong. I used to cry. Afterwards, when I understood what he meant, he was very kind. He called that morality without tears."

"But you could not have thought much about right and wrong if you were living with a man who was not your husband."

"Why not?" said Rose, opening her blue eyes. "He was not anybody else's husband. It did not hurt anybody."

"It hurt you."

"Me! Oh, no! How badly I have explained. I cannot tell you how good he has been to me. I cannot tell you what those few weeks were to me, or how much I loved him."

"You loved him! Do you love him now?"

There was no answer. The question struck upon the open wound. Rose sank into a chair and resting her arms upon the table laid her head upon them with a wail of pain. There was no mistaking the truth of that note.

Ruth looked down at the fair head. Hardened as she was by anger and the sharp sense of the disgrace that Templeton had brought upon her, she still could not control a movement of compassion. But the girl remained a mystery, and curiosity held back her judgment. Until she had questioned further, she could neither wholly pity nor wholly condemn.

"If you love him so much how can you bear to see him married to another woman?" she asked.

Rose lifted dreary eyes holding within them the ghost of the morning's agony. "I cannot bear it."

"But—but—you feel all this and you are not angry with him?"

"Angry!" In spite of the pain in them, the eyes took a new expression. "Why should I be angry?"

Ruth caught her breath. "You have every right to be angry," she said impatiently. "Did he not deceive you? Did he not tell you he would marry you?"

"No!"

"Did you not think that he might?"

"I prayed to God to put the thought into his heart. I loved him so much, and—I——"

"What?"

"I wanted so much to live straight—to be good—quite good, I mean—not only good in little things, such as honor—like ladies and gentlemen, but good all through, quite, quite good. It was silly of me. Of course I couldn't be. I gave it up after a while."

With a quick movement Rose pressed both hands across her eyes. This girl's view of life was extraordinary, but she held it with a certain honest frankness. There was no doubt at all in her mind. Everything to her was clear-cut, simple, and obvious. But she was wrong—Ruth was sure that she was wrong, but what could Ruth say or do to prove it? Of

what use was her training to her now? She was crammed with rules of life and maxims for judgment—rules and maxims out of books, the thoughts of men and saints of other times and circumstances. She could not apply her rules here; there was no maxim for this occasion. Her ideas became suddenly convulsed, and she felt as though she were losing hold even on that which Rose had said so innocently, she had learned from Templeton—morality itself.

"You say yourself that Mr. Templeton prevented you from leading a good life, and yet at the same time you say that he is not to blame!"

"I never thought about a good life before I knew him," answered Rose. "He made me want to be good."

"But you were his—his——" Ruth could not bring her lips to say the word.

"Oh, yes," said Rose simply. She wondered why the other hesitated.

"And now that he has thrown you on one side to marry a woman of birth and of position, you still love him."

"I cannot help it," answered Rose brokenly. "I would not like to hurt him."

"Where will you go now that he has left you?"

"I don't know."

"What will you do?"

"I don't know." Ruth's curious eyes perceived a shudder run through Rose. She did not know what it meant, but curiosity in her thrilled suddenly to pity. "I have not thought about it," continued Rose. "It has been so sudden. It is very terrible to have to bear so much pain before one dies, isn't it?"

There was a long silence. Miss Templeton was overwhelmed by the rush of new ideas. Had she thought about herself or the state of her feelings, she would have found that her dislike to the girl was being gradually undermined by a surer knowledge. On closer acquaintance Rose proved to be extraordinarily simple in comparison with the radiant, sophisticated creature who, it seemed, had stooped to her rival in the morning. There were no traces of the Beauty left.

She had vanished as utterly as yesterday's rainbow. Here was an apologetic woman, gentle—almost plain, over whose future Fate had given Ruth a strange power. But her victory brought her no joy, only an immense and terrible compassion—a compassion that she almost feared, as though it might prompt her to unwelcome difficult action. But she must know more. Rose's motives were still hidden.

"Listen, Rose," she said, oblivious of the fact that she had used the familiar name for the first time. "I want you to attend to me. Suppose this lady—this lady whom Mr. Templeton is to marry—should be angry with him for having lived with you?"

"Why should she be angry?"

Good Heavens! It would be easier, Ruth thought, to argue with the inhabitant of another sphere. Not only did she and Rose speak a different language, but they thought different thoughts and looked at the world with different eyes. Should they ever arrive at the same conclusion, Ruth knew that they would get there by different roads. But she forced herself to speak patiently.

"Because——"

Rose interrupted. "Do you mean that she might be jealous of me?"

That had not occurred to Miss Templeton. The moral objection had overwhelmed any lesser consideration. But it was impossible to explain that to Rose in less than a lifetime. She was still considering the translation of her thoughts into the simplest words possible when Rose broke in again.

"She need not be jealous of me," she said slowly, and once more the red flooded her forehead. She recoiled from the truth, but she faced it. "She need not be jealous. He did not love me." Bitter was it to her to form that thought, more bitter to bring it forth in words. Ruth knew something, but not all of what that avowal cost her. She looked curiously at the delicate profile turned away—she could imagine the sudden quiver of lip and nostril—and as she looked her compassion grew into another emotion for which there is no name, something that was more than pity, yet less than liking.

But, in spite of it, nay perhaps because of it, she probed the situation to the full.

"You loved him, but he did not love you. Is that it?"

"Yes."

"Then why did he take you to live with him?"

Rose opened her eyes. This young lady was very slow to understand a common situation.

"He wanted me—in the way men want women," she explained further. "I was good enough for that. He thought I was pretty, but he did not love me." She stopped and weighed her words. "No, it was not only that; there was something else too, or I don't believe I should have cared so much. It is difficult to explain. He is different to other men. He liked to feel that I belonged to him altogether. He liked to laugh at me and teach me and make me angry with him. He was not satisfied until I loved him more than all the world. I think he liked to feel his power over me. I wonder if you understand!"

Ruth Templeton understood fully. The yoke that she had found so galling Rose had accepted with gratitude and pride. She saw her engagement now in another light. This woman loved Hugh Templeton more than she did. Rose's love spent itself in giving, careless of return. And yet Ruth had loved the man enough to suffer horribly—and she still loved him; past experience told her that the battle was only just beginning. But she closed her eyes to the thought. There was no use now in dwelling upon future wretchedness. Her way lay straight before her; there was only one thing now to be done. Suddenly she felt a recrudescence of the morning's anger. Why had this girl come like this to upset her happiness? She was by her own showing a wicked woman. Why should Ruth trouble about her further?

But she was forced to trouble, that was the worst of it! And the suspicion that of the two Rose's love was the best added to her bitterness. There had been passion in Ruth's desire towards Templeton—passion that she had fought against and feared, and there had also been that lust for power over another life which was as strong in her as in

Templeton himself. These things were not love, and Ruth knew it now, for she had seen into Rose's heart and its purity had made her feel ashamed.

There was only one thing to be done. But how to do it?

The minutes passed as she strove for a decision, until suddenly looking up she saw that Rose was crying. Her elbows rested upon the table; her hands supported her forehead, and tears following one another in fast succession splashed silently upon the tablecloth. Ruth could count them. Her anger died, and in its place there rose a sudden quickening of life—a new energy that brought the tears into her dry eyes and made her heart beat faster. Pity was strong in her—pity and something else. She could do this girl no harm as long as she felt thus towards her, and feeling thus she reached to a better mind. It had been so easy to hate her—it was easy still—terribly easy—unless—perhaps—she loved her.

She stood up and touched Rose's shoulder.

"Don't cry," she said, "don't cry." The words were nothing, but the tone in which they were spoken carried healing. Rose moved her hands impulsively, and catching Ruth's fingers kissed them. She still sobbed, but in these tears the agony of her grief was lessened. Perhaps she was shifting it on to another's shoulders. Ruth stood beside her quiet and very pale. After a moment she took Rose's hands and laid them upon her own.

"You and I are here to help each other," she said. "I don't think that you can do without me, and I—I cannot do without you."

Rose did not understand her; she looked wonderingly into the set white face.

"May I ask you something?" Her voice was tremulous and beseeching.

"Yes."

"Are you—the lady?"

"What lady?"

"The lady that is going to marry Mr. Templeton."

There was silence. Rose scanned Ruth's face, but not a muscle moved. Rose should have learnt by this time that self-

control is the most conspicuous of the well-bred virtues. Then the words came very quietly:

"I—am not the lady that is going to marry Mr. Templeton."

"Oh, I am so glad," cried Rose joyfully, smiling through her tears—smiles with Rose were seldom beyond call—"I thought just for one moment that you might be—you were so angry with me. And—and—well, I couldn't have told you anything if you had been—could I? You see I don't want to do any harm. I don't want to hurt Mr. Templeton. I——"

"I know."

Suddenly Rose's brief smile was swept away by a new gust of tears, as her pain, held back for a moment, returned upon her.

"It is terrible to bear, isn't it?" she wept. "If you loved him you would feel it as badly as I do, wouldn't you?"

"Yes."

"But you would not cry as I cry. You are so brave, and so strong. I can see it in your face. Do you despise me?"

"No."

But Rose's words came to Ruth from afar off, in the tones, it seemed, of another's voice. "You will be so strong that you will be longing to use your strength. There will be a way—something will happen."

So this was the fulfillment of Sir Benjamin's prophecy—this was the event long waited for. But how different to her forecast! How dreary and sordid a thing was this—how soiled and tattered and disreputable! How shameful to be concerned in it at all! Then she looked into Rose's tear-stained face and a remembrance of the hope that had for a moment touched it fell upon her heart. Poor child! Poor broken child, so steadfast in her faith, so unswerving in her loyalty.

"Ah, my dear," she cried, and the words were drawn from her by a sudden need, "I am not brave at all. You are braver than I. Love me a little, Rose, for I am lonely too, and I want love now so very badly!"

Rose opened her arms and for a moment the two women clung together weeping.

"Then you once loved somebody," said Rose with an arm still on Ruth's shoulder.

"Yes."

"And did he leave you—as Mr. Templeton has left me?"

"It was not quite the same," replied Ruth slowly. "But I was going to be married—once."

Rose looked at Ruth for a moment and then bent forward and kissed her full on the mouth. It was the kiss of an equal.

"You must have been very unhappy," she said gravely, "because you are so very good to me. I am glad that we are friends."

After Rose had gone back to Tremellon, Ruth sat for a long time at the open window. The battle for her was only just beginning, and she knew it, but the flickering light of her ideal was steadied now, it seemed, by the presence of a woman of flesh and blood—she had foregone her stars for her lover's sake, but the earth had proved itself neither kind nor warm, only full of a passionate unrest until she had found her ideal once again, brought down to her on earth by a woman's hand. Her duty was plain now, and her desire was wholly towards it. There was no longer any clash of purpose. The knowledge that she held this girl's future in her hand and that Rose trusted and loved her, was sufficient to turn her thoughts entirely in one direction. She felt a strange joy in her own pain that reached to exaltation. She had become so strong that she longed to use her strength.

She flung her mind back over the last few weeks. It seemed as though her life was only beginning, and that weeks, even months had been folded into the events of this one day. How long was it since she had awakened, shivering from her dream of the night before? How long since she had walked into Rose's sitting room as into a trap set for her by Fate? The aspect of that room—every piece of furniture in it—was impressed upon her memory, doubly impressed, for she had seen it first dimly in the vision of Ann Hand and afterwards in actual fact, with the accentuated consciousness of emotion that imprints insignificant details for ever upon the mind. She had seen everything in that room not once, but twice. To-day,

with the vague terror of her dream still upon her, she thought she had recognized it. But she had not recognized Rose, although Ann Hand had described Rose also. For the first time Ruth, in recalling Ann Hand's words, realized an actual woman. "Her faace be laike a flure; her hair be glimmer gowd. Her eyes be gray at times and then again they du be brown. The man has put his arm round she." Ruth shuddered. She would conjure up the past no longer, for in the light of her present knowledge it had grown too terrible to recall lightly. But she knew now for certain that the hardest part of the battle was to come.

Suddenly she sprang to her feet and walked quickly up and down the room. "It is very terrible to have to bear so much pain before one dies." The thought of Rose's words came back to her, and with all the strength of her young blood she repudiated their assumption of inevitable misery. "Why must I bear so much pain?" she asked proudly. "I will not bear it. What is the use of it? Why does God allow it? Why?" She stopped in her impatient tramping and stood once more before the window. The storm had died away. All was gray and calm, the sky bent to the sea, but neither sky nor sea held an answer to her question. She turned her back upon the window and once more faced the room. Monica Holden's notebook lay open upon the bureau. It was an old book now, and nearly finished. It contained the records of those mistakes which are the material of experience. "*The thoughts of Monica Holden*," the worn gold lettering gleamed in the half light. Ruth disliked the title, it seemed to her to be pretentious, but it was her own grandmother who had presented the book, and Mrs. Worthington Grahame's ideas were always those of the advanced lady of the nineteenth century. "The thoughts of Monica Holden." Ruth read the title out loud. "I have no thoughts," she added grimly; "all my thoughts are questions." The book was not forbidden to her. Monica had often read her extracts from it. She picked it up now and turned the pages.

"Love," she read, "*is the cause and the consummation of all the pain that is under Heaven. In the hierarchy of Angels,*

the Cherub stands for love, the Seraph for wisdom—one sees what lies before the eyes of God, but the other knows what rests beneath his heart."

Was that the answer to her question? Perhaps it was true. Perhaps in her newly awakened love for this helpless Rose she had found not only a cure for her pain, but a refuge from the temptation that had beset her. Perhaps. She turned the page.

"And what says Mother Juliana of Norwich on this subject? 'What would'st thou wit thy Lord's meaning in this thing? Wit it well: Love was his meaning. Who shewed it thee? Love. Wherefore shewed he it thee? For love. Hold thee therein and thou shalt wit it more in that same. But thou shalt never wit therein other without end'."

Perhaps it was true—perhaps! She had not found the answer to the riddle yet, but Monica Holden, it seemed, had found it, and her mother had found it, and perhaps, some day, she thought, she might in some way find it also. Some day the faith, which they declared was knowledge, might come to her; some day the blindness which to them was sight might fall upon her eyes, and some day the love which she read here was the cause and the consummation of all pain might help her to walk the world without a shudder.

Someone turned the handle of the gate. It was Monica. Ruth went out to meet her. She came home depressed after an unsuccessful journey. Dragging kicking human creatures from the Abyss is dispiriting work, and requires much physical energy. Still at the present moment the sight of Ruth's face made her forget her disappointment.

"What is the matter, Ruth?" she cried, slipping her hand into the girl's arm. "You look so pale. Has anything happened? Is everything all right."

"Yes," returned Ruth, "something has happened. But everything is all right. Only I am going home to-morrow, Aunt Monica, and I want to talk about it."

Chapter Sixteen

I would have you be like a fire well kindled, which catches at everything you throw in and turns it into flame and brightness.—MARCUS AURELIUS.

SIR RAYMOND and Lady Templeton sat at breakfast in the great dining room at Templeton Manor. Elizabeth would have preferred a smaller room, but Sir Raymond, even when they were alone, needed a spacious atmosphere, and the somber oak of the dining room panelling suited him better than the white walls and roses that his wife loved. Lady Templeton did all she could to mitigate the bareness of the huge room. The round breakfast table was so small that it looked like a blot in the center of the carpet, but she was able to lean across it comfortably, and chat to her husband. He did not appreciate her pains. He liked the flowers and the fruit that gleamed among the breakfast things, because each was a perfect specimen of its kind, and reflected credit upon the Templeton gardens, and he liked their colors, that showed in the polished surface of the table, because they displayed the excellence of that piece of furniture.

Sir Raymond had views on the subject of breakfast. He insisted on service during that meal. He objected to hissing urns, and coffee poured out for him by his wife. The butler took charge of the cups at a distance, and a nearer footman watched his plate.

"Why should I have to jump up and down, and tear my food from a side table?" said Sir Raymond. "Why should my wife worry herself with crockery, and pour coffee into teacups, and tea into coffee cups, as she most certainly would, for she is a very absent-minded person? No, thank you, I prefer a more civilized method."

Elizabeth remembered breakfast in her old home, long ago,

as being one of the most delightful hours of the day. The old-fashioned silver urn and delicate teacups, over which her mother presided graciously, the letters laid by each person's plate, and the newspaper warming on her father's chair, the great bowl of roses on the white damask tablecloth, the apples from the orchard, and the few bunches of grapes which the old gardener sent in with pride. Then the heavy Victorian sideboard, with its display of home produce, the cold pheasant, the game pie, the Bradenham ham, bacon frizzling in the chafing dish, porridge for the children in a willow-patterned tureen. She had liked the unseemly method of wandering off to help herself to food; she had liked the absence of servants, and the presence of her correspondence, which she would glance at from time to time, while her father read aloud scraps of news from the *Times*, and criticised the behavior of the Government.

All Sir Raymond's newspapers lay respectably in order on a table in one of the ante-rooms of the hall: all his letters were placed in rows upon another table. The butler carved the Templeton pheasant, and the footman handed coffee. Elizabeth had nothing to do but to look at her husband, as she had done for the last twenty years. Sir Raymond's views on breakfast extended to conversation.

"It is an impertinence to ask me if I have slept well. That is nobody's affair but my own, and a most intimate question. Why should I be forced to reveal the fact, that for half the night I have considered my shares in Copper Deeps, or smarted over the infamous behavior of the Parish Council? No, my dear Elizabeth, at Templeton all such inquiries are forsworn. We do not discuss the state of our nerves, neither do we read our private letters in public. Our newspapers are kept until later, for the hall, the library, the smoking room, and the gallery, and in any of these places we may read how a Labor member has ousted a Conservative; how the army is to be reduced, and the navy abolished."

To-day, however, Elizabeth had brought her letters with her. There were two things she wished to discuss with her husband, when his early morning frown had sufficiently lifted.

He had reached the marmalade stage in his breakfast, and the servants had withdrawn, before she saw her opportunity.

"Raymond, I have heard from Hugh. He is coming over for Lady Dacre's ball, and would like to stay here for a day or two. Also he is anxious about Ruth, he says, and wants news of her."

There was not a vestige of gloom on Sir Raymond's forehead now, all was as clear as sunshine.

"What a nice fellow that is, Elizabeth," he said cordially. "Invite him, by all means. Send a telegram, and tell him to come to-day. Is there anything else?" he added.

Lady Templeton still deliberated.

"Yes," she replied slowly, "I have also heard from Ruth."

"But she is not allowed to write letters." Sir Raymond's face changed.

"I know."

"Extraordinary, and exactly like a woman! A week ago she was mad on following out this rest cure in every detail. I remember how she annoyed poor Hugh about it—and now she writes a letter—a thing she is expressly forbidden to do. All women are alike; if you give them what they want, they don't want it, and if you don't give them what they want—well, what is it about?"

"I can't quite understand," replied Elizabeth; "she writes to say that she is coming home."

"Tcha! What nonsense! She has only just gone there. When was it? The day before yesterday?"

"It was a week ago. But this is what she says: 'I am quite well now, and, dearest, you must not blame me for wishing to return. I have a good reason. Aunt Monica has been perfectly sweet to me, and I have had a lovely time, but—you will trust me, won't you?—I must come home to-morrow. I must! I must! When you get this letter, I shall have started. I shall be at Templeton in time for dinner.'"

"Upon my soul!" exclaimed Sir Raymond, springing up from the table, and crossing to the window. "Pretty cool! She doesn't even give us the chance of telegraphing to stop her! Now, that's the kind of thing the modern girl does. She

not only refuses to obey her parents, but she doesn't even give them a chance of suggesting that she should." He drummed his fingers upon the glass irritably. "A week is not very long. I wonder if she's coming home as flabby as she went away. I do like a girl to be firm-fleshed."

"She says that she is quite well!"

"Does she? She seems to have taken the matter pretty completely into her own hands. First it pleases her to go away, and then it pleases her to return at the end of one week. Well, we shan't have to manage her much longer. I hope Hugh won't find her too novel; I suppose this is the result of her bringing up!"

"I have always found Ruth obedient," said Lady Templeton.

Sir Raymond turned towards the window, as though to imply the futility of further discussion. Outside, the beeches reddened into flame, and the green of the lawn shone brilliantly under the dusting of golden leaves. In the gray distance beyond the river autumn burned less fiercely, though here and there the gray was washed with amber.

"We will fix the wedding day, to-night!" said Sir Raymond suddenly; "they will both be here. Don't forget to send that telegram to Hugh."

Elizabeth turned a shade whiter: she had always closed her mind to the thought of Ruth's wedding, and now it was upon her. Except for her unreasonable dislike of Hugh Templeton, she had only to face the common lot of mothers: but she had not realized how difficult that would be.

"Why don't you say something, Elizabeth?" said Sir Raymond, "don't you agree with me?"

"Yes, dear," Lady Templeton's voice was scarcely audible. "I—quite agree."

"Then why on earth don't you say so? How was I to know what you were thinking of?" The baronet looked at his wife keenly. "I don't believe you do agree with me," he added; "you don't look as if you did. Whenever I arrange anything, Elizabeth, no matter what, you always seem to me to be criticising it—or to have some odd contrary opinion of your

own hidden away, somewhere. It's exceedingly unpleasant to me," he went on. "I am always frank with you. I have no secrets from you. My heart is as open to you as a child's. You know it is, don't you, Elizabeth?"

"Yes, dear." Lady Templeton's words came slowly. "I am very sorry. I must have seemed to be very unsympathetic."

"You did. You always seem to me to be very unsympathetic. You never greet me with a smile, in the way in which other wives greet their husbands. You are never really glad to see me. You never take up my quarrels with whole-hearted enthusiasm—look at Radden's Corner, for instance! You are always finding that there is something to be said for the other side—against me. You seem to have some sort of a life of your own, quite apart from me—and—well, I consider that thankless, to say the least of it, after all the sacrifices I've made for you. Think of what some wives have to bear from their husbands and then"—his voice trembled with self-pity—"think of all I have been to you, and all I have given up for you."

That Sir Raymond had made sacrifices on her behalf was a new idea to Elizabeth. She did not ask him what they were, and indeed, had she done so, he could hardly have explained. She lifted dewy eyes to him.

"Forgive me, Raymond," she said impulsively. "I have failed in love to you. It is always that—one is so weak—one cannot love enough—but I have been very pained about Ruth—and—other things. Forgive me, dear!"

She held out her hands, and half laughing, half crying, raised her face to his.

Sir Raymond kissed her lips lightly.

"Very well, Elizabeth," he said, "we will talk no more about it. It is a very painful subject—very painful—but I am glad that you realize that you were to blame, and not I. To be contrite for a fault is to partly undo it: isn't that so? No one has ever begged me in vain for forgiveness. The matter ends here."

Elizabeth drew back, nettled. His egotism was blind—crass. It was only when judged by a standard that was so far above

him that he could not see it—that she had failed. While he—he—No, she turned away—was she then so virtuous that she dared to judge her husband? Was she so impeccable?

Justice clamored at her, but—what was justice to her? She knew of something as high above justice as the heaven is high above the earth. Justice, where she was herself concerned, was nothing to her. She would weigh no heart in the balance but her own, and that she had already weighed, and found it wanting.

“Yes, Raymond,” she said with a new smile, “the matter ends here. You won’t have to complain of me in the future.”

Sir Raymond patted his wife’s cheek with more cordiality than he had shown her for months, and then, with a kiss, bade her good-by for the morning. The little episode had left him full of a complacent altruism, for it is the most delightful thing in the world to be in the position to forgive. He fell to thinking of Ruth’s wedding.

The same carriage that met Ruth at East Watlingford, the station for Templeton, was instructed to wait also for Mr. Hugh Templeton, whose train was due only five minutes after hers. So the footman reported as he met Ruth at the railway carriage, and the announcement came to her as the last touch of irony. At one time during her journey it had seemed to her as if her difficult role in this drama contained some elements of heroism, and at others that she was playing merely in some extravagant and exceedingly bitter farce. Now she could find no reading for her part during the three miles between East Watlingford and Templeton. The thought filled her with dismay, chilled her to the very finger tips. The footman stood waiting by the carriage door; desperately, she asked for her maid.

“She is going on with the luggage, miss,” said the footman, in surprise. “They are waiting to take up Mr. Templeton’s boxes.”

“Send her here,” said Ruth, “and tell George to drive on with my things. We can take Mr. Templeton’s portmanteau with us.”

Ruth lay back in the brougham, thankful for the respite

from a tête-à-tête. The time and place for explanations would now be of her own choosing. Ingenuity had baffled coincidence.

When the carriage arrived at Templeton Sir Raymond stood on the steps to welcome it.

"Homing pigeons!" he exclaimed, smiling. He had forgotten his annoyance with his daughter in his scheme for her wedding, but the sight of the maid with the umbrellas drew from him an exclamation. Later, he questioned the footman, and learned that she was there at Miss Templeton's desire.

During dinner he watched the couple narrowly. Ruth was faultless; she was dressed in dull white silk: and she glimmered like the moonstones about her neck, but Templeton, generally a tactful talker, seemed to be depressed; it was not until the ladies had left the dining room that he revived. Then Sir Raymond found him witty and discriminating, as usual, a man after his own heart. He leant back in his massive carved chair, and, helped by his cigar, considered him. He and his nephew were at one on all vital questions—they held the same political creed, and went to the same tailor; they were singularly alike in appearance, and their voice proclaimed them relations. Sir Raymond remembered Miss Whitter's words: "He is a Templeton to the backbone." "Yes, yes," thought Sir Raymond, "I was just such another. Ruth is a lucky girl."

"The bride is coy, eh, Hugh?"

Templeton cracked a nut in silence.

"No matter! No matter!" Sir Raymond laughed jocosely.

"I can't undersand her," said Templeton. "She seems to avoid me. I was full of pleasure and surprise at the thought of meeting her unexpectedly, and I found her maid with her in the carriage. I couldn't say a word."

"And she wouldn't speak to you afterwards! Puss! That's her coquetry. She is laughing at you in her sleeve."

"I never saw anyone less like laughing in my life," replied Hugh Templeton.

When he reached the drawing room he found that Ruth had already gone to bed. Next morning she had a headache,

and breakfasted in her room. He was sure now that something had happened. A footman handed him a letter. He read it through and passed it to Sir Raymond without a word.

"Will you come and speak to me in mother's room, at eleven. R. T."

"Odd," commented the baronet, wiping his eye-glass. "I never noticed before that her initials are the same as mine. Not quite the same, of course, for she has only one Christian name. My second name is a most unfortunate choice, Oliver, you know. R. O. T. I was always called Dry-rot at Eton."

"Do you think that note is coquetry?" asked Templeton bitterly.

"Of course!" returned Sir Raymond. "Of course. Bless my soul, what do you expect? Do you want her to call you ducky, like a housemaid?"

Chapter Seventeen

"Till, in the strife of hearts that yearn,
A hidden goal to gain,
I touch the keys of life and learn
The mysteries of pain."

L. H.

AS Templeton walked towards Elizabeth's sitting room to keep his appointment with Ruth he prepared to fight and to win a battle whose motive was still obscure to him. He passed down the long corridor, scented by last summer's pot pourri that stood in Chinese bowls on pedestals of ebony; he passed innumerable cabinets of ivories, majolica, and inlaid work, all of which Sir Raymond had had catalogued with great precision for the benefit of posterity; but he did not look to right or left until he reached a portrait of Ruth that stood at the end of the corridor facing the staircase. He generally stopped for a minute or two before this picture: it had been painted some years ago, when Ruth was about sixteen. The eyes were wide and artless. Her heavy hair, which fell on each side of her face, was pulled back by a blue ribbon. She wore a white dress and a blue sash. Her young body, innocent of whalebone, fell into natural curves, and the whole pose and painting of the figure suggested the influence of Romney. It was the same effect that Templeton had noticed on the night of the dinner given to the Duchess of Kidderminster. But now in the morning light it touched him differently. He remembered the conversation on forgotten memories: The picture had given him a clue.

"Good God!" he exclaimed inwardly, "I've got it!" He stood close against the wall for a better view. "She's the living image of Rose de Winton!" Then he shook his head with a petulant jerk as though to free himself from some entanglement of ideas. He turned to a mirror on the other side and smoothed his hair. This was no moment in which to

indulge a mad eye for a likeness. All his strength and all his cunning would be wanted at the impending interview, he knew that much. Ruth was slipping away from him, and he would use all his body and all his brain to draw her back. His eye brightened. This was a sport in which Hugh Templeton was an adept.

He found the face in the mirror exceedingly good-looking, and a touch of Sir Raymond's complacency curved his mouth to smiling insolence. He was Ruth's match in looks, that was certain, and in his opinion, as in that of his uncle, she had every reason to consider herself an extremely lucky woman. But last night Ruth's face had worn an expression of immovability, and her eyes for the first time had seemed hard. There was something dogged about her, and something steely also; she looked as though she might stand firm and slay in flash. But he would master her, and he was impatient to begin. There was that in her, he knew it well, that would fight on his side. Disguise it as she might, she loved him, and hers was a passionate virtue that would deliver her into his hands. He had many weapons,—the gift of soft speech, self-control, and a strong will,—but his chief weapon would be one wielded by a traitor inside the citadel. He had only to will it, and Ruth by her love and her compassion would fight against herself.

He laughed as he hurried away. What had happened to affect her in this way? The thing was annoying, of course, but extraordinarily stimulating. It seemed strange to him that men should find perpetual excitement in killing animals when there were women in the world to amuse them.

He turned the handle of the door and went in. Ruth was already there waiting for him. She wore a white dress, and once more that extraordinary likeness forced itself upon him.

"It's Rose! It's Rose!" he exclaimed inwardly: "Rose looking like a wooden soldier with all the sweetness drubbed out of her!" And yet it was not Rose, but Ruth, and scoff as he might he knew in his heart that Ruth was the woman he loved as much as he was capable of loving anything. He walked towards her holding out his hands.

"Dearest, what is troubling you?" His manner was easy and spontaneous, but suspicion had grown anxious and it gripped him now to pain.

Ruth pointed to a chair. "Sit down, please." She did not see the outstretched hands.

Templeton fell back. "I feel like a schoolboy about to receive a flogging," he said, and laughed.

She did not respond, and in a flash his manner changed.

"Ruth, you have no right to behave like this. I love you and you are hurting me. My darling, you are hurting me horribly—all for a caprice! What has happened?"

Ruth sat still with a hand on each arm of her chair. Her face was like a white mask. She looked straight before her. The moment had come, and although she had longed for it, she quailed. Her heart prayed inarticulately, but actual words seemed far away.

"What has happened?" asked Templeton, again curiously scanning her face.

She knew that she must speak, but it was no time for easy phrases.

"I know—everything," she said quietly.

Beyond a quiver of certain uncontrollable facial muscles, Templeton sat still. He made no sign. How much did "everything" imply? Then his tense attitude relaxed and the habitual mocking devil leapt in his eye.

"What a melodramatic statement!" he said lightly. "There isn't a man living who wouldn't tremble before it. Don't you know of the bishop who received a telegram on the day of his consecration—'They know everything'—and fled? I am no braver than that bishop: I feel inclined to flee now. Please explain."

His words brought no answering smile into Ruth's face. She still wore that impeturbable tranquillity. She found that now her only sensation was one of annoying stiffness of throat and tongue that made speech difficult.

"Rose Gray at Tremellon—has told me everything."

The thing was done, and once more there was silence.

Templeton would need all his wits. He sat with his head buried in his hands.

Ruth did not look at him. She still stared in front of her. But the thing was done; the words had been said. Her mind was released from its tension. She would think. She had almost mastered her anger and her shame; she struggled now to leave her feelings out of the question. The issue seemed greater than her own personal desires. What did they matter after all? She had lost the thread of her life—dropped it to a sordid passion; now it was given back to her by circumstance. But in order to hold it, she knew well that she must accept voluntarily the pain that Rose had striven with. Suffer she must—she saw that now for a law of the Universe. She might accept this law of pain, using it, as it were, for her own soul's life, or she might refuse it—uselessly. If she fought against it, it would crush her as it had crushed Rose; if she accepted it, it would lift her even above itself. But it is difficult in the midst of a battle to see the end. From her heart went up a wordless prayer for strength.

"How did it happen?"

Templeton heard Ruth's explanation without moving; she held back nothing. It was worse—far worse—than he had imagined. He had never dreamt of such a thing. While he sat with his head buried in his hands he pondered many diverse courses. He was like the expert chess player who plays ten games at once.

Then with a quick exclamation he changed his attitude.

"It was before I knew you. Oh, Ruth, Ruth, if we had only come together again earlier!"

A shiver passed across Ruth's face; Templeton was quick to notice it.

"What does that mean?"

She struggled to hold her impersonal view, but at that moment the truth was too strong for her—one side of the truth.

"It means that if we had come together earlier, I should never have known."

"Known—what?"

"You."

"And therefore, not knowing, you might have married me?"

"Yes."

The curt phrase held everything, her view of the matter—of him—and—her decision. It was destruction.

"My God! You *might* have married me!"

Templeton crumpled up and once more his head sank upon his hands. His posture expressed despair, but his brain was busy. At any rate he had knocked the bottom of the matter here; there was no more to come, and that was comfort. Should he withdraw? He was afraid of a false move. Should he effect a truce and reconsider his tactics. He might bid her good-by. That would give them both time to think, and in the light of the irrevocable she might reconsider her behavior. Experience had taught him that the most effective method of bringing a woman to her senses is to bid her farewell for ever. This of course could hardly be repeated, but its effect for the first time might be assured.

Slowly he raised himself, and slowly—slowly he moved towards the door. Then he stopped. Ruth did not speak.

"Good-by!" he said, with a quick hopeless gesture, the hands lifted, turned outwards in appeal, and then dropped. It expressed the end of all things.

"Good-by." He stood, his head bent, his hand upon the door handle. "I am not fit to touch you."

His attitude was not entirely an actor's pose, it expressed a true emotion. He was miserable. He loved the girl and he did not want to lose her, also he did not want his children to lose so ideal a mother, or his future home so competent a mistress. The immutable part of the Templeton nature—the part that scrutinized the future, the part that would make the good squire, the kind husband, the just father—was disappointed; it expressed itself in that angry drop of the hand. But at the same time the will-o'-the-wisp that was also Templeton—the part that lived solely in the present—enjoyed to the full the drama of the situation. It enjoyed the game also—the hazard, the chance that might overrule the most skillful

maneuver. Would he win, or would she? He would have liked to bet upon it with the other Templeton—the worthy person who was so much disturbed. Here at any rate was a woman for whom it was worth while fighting! There was no counting on Ruth; with poor Rose, alas, the conclusion of such a conflict would have been determined. He still stood with his hand upon the door handle, but even in the midst of these thoughts and behind them, as it were, the conviction that could not leave her even for a short time shaped itself. Possibly her placid acquiescence in his good-by had something to do with this sudden change of feeling, for to his surprise she made no sign. However that might be, she held him. He cast about for reasons to justify his irresolution. Even if he decided to leave her now, he argued, he would be in no mood to desire an all powerful plan of action; he was disturbed, excited, curious. The next step was to discard argument for decision. He took it promptly. He would remain. The thing should be fought out here and now. Another opportunity might be long in coming. He must use the present moment or lose it; one thing was certain, he could not hold it. But surely he had held it long enough. Surely it was time for that traitor within to turn upon her.

He walked forward with quick, firm footsteps.

"I cannot go like this; in justice you must hear my defense."

"I am ready to hear anything."

"I did wrong. I own it. But when I first took Rose down with me to Cornwall I had no thought beyond teaching her and turning her out a better woman than she was before."

"Purely from motives of philanthropy? Is that what you mean me to understand, Hugh?"

Templeton looked keenly at the girl seated royally above him wielding judgment. He wondered where in the rarefied atmosphere of Templeton she had gained her wisdom. He knew little of the intricacies of the heart of a young girl or of the instinct that can supplement deficient knowledge. He took refuge in that sure defense—a half truth.

"I taught her and clothed her," he said; "I helped her to

a decent life—you have no idea what her surroundings were like. Afterwards—I was to blame. But if I had not met you I would have married her. I loved you and it became impossible.”

Ruth listened bewildered. There was no reaching him. He was as slippery as an eel. By acknowledging his fault he turned aside her weapon and by acknowledging his love he turned it against herself. He was very clever.

“So it was my fault that you deserted Rose?”

Templeton hesitated. Question and answer were falling neatly to his design. “Yes,” he said after a pause, “I suppose so, if you put it like that. How could I marry one woman while I loved another as I love you? Can you not understand? Can you not forgive me?”

His defense was plausible. Ruth brought reason to bear on prejudice and stifled the instinctive distrust that moved behind it. She fell back upon the consideration of her own conduct. Here, she was dealing with a shameful thing, and in order to touch it at all she must achieve an unassailable position. “Can you not forgive me?” urged Templeton. Duty pointed to forgiveness, but in order to forgive so great a wrong she must forget herself—her pain and her pride—entirely.

Templeton desired a forgiveness that rose from the very opposite motive—a pardon given not because she had laid aside her own desires at the bidding of duty, but because those desires had overridden duty and had become so imperative that life without him would have become for her impossible. In order to effect this end he would stop at nothing. He was ready to enlist not only duty, but all the virtues in his service—all the virtues—and more.

Pity is love’s own sister, and in the case of men and women love and passion are inextricably twined. Passion would finish what compassion had begun, and Ruth would be his irrevocably. But pity must be first invoked.

He took a step nearer.

“Forgive me, Ruth,” he said hoarsely. “Forgive me—not because you love me—I can never hope for that again—but

because you are my ideal of perfection and I cannot bear to see you less than yourself. I cannot go without your absolution. Forgive me. I am like a beggar asking you for bread. Forgive me, Ruth."

"I do forgive you," replied Ruth unhesitatingly; "I forgive you from the bottom of my heart. I want to be friends with Rose too—if I can."

Templeton flushed. Her manner of bracketing his name and that of Rose de Winton was especially distasteful to him; but the serpent, although more subtle than all the beasts of the field, is doomed to go upon his belly and eat dust. He stifled his chagrin.

"Then you will not send me away at once," he pleaded. "You will say nothing about this. You will give me another chance."

"That has nothing to do with my forgiveness," replied the girl gently. "I have given you that, but I cannot see you again—and I shall be obliged to say that I have broken off my engagement."

"Then your forgiveness is a mere parody!" replied Templeton doggedly. "What do you suppose I go to, when you send me away from here? I love you and you can help me. Why do you refuse?" His manner changed and he continued brokenly. "My dear, I can say no more. I leave it all in your hands. You will decide what is right. Only remember that your decision will affect my life in a way that nothing else can."

A gathering distress shone in Ruth's eyes. She felt the responsibility—greater than she could bear. Her weight of pain was lost in the immensity of this burden. Her own future, Templeton's, and Rose's all hung, it seemed, upon her words. She longed for her mother's advice, but it had seemed disloyal to Templeton to let even a mother know his secret. "I love you. I am in your hands." She could not evade the choice. In her ignorance of the honorable course of a man in such circumstances, Ruth never thought of judging Templeton for the part he now played towards her. She was absorbed only with her decision and passionately anxious to choose

rightly. Her distress was so great that Templeton began to be at fault. Love, he thought, had at last awakened also to plead his cause. He would use his last weapon. Every force was against her.

She leant back in her chair, shutting her eyes, for the strain of her thoughts had been very great: her lashes showed delicate markings on her white cheeks. Templeton bent over her.

"Forgive me utterly, Ruth," he murmured. "Forgive me for love's sake only and not from duty. Dearest, I love you and you love me. Oh, let love have its way with you. Things can never be as they were, but through everything you love me. You cannot help it. 'Love strikes but one hour.' You love me, Ruth."

Unprepared as she was to combat them, the words had their effect. The girl did not move, for the matter seemed at last to grow beyond her control. A strange enchantment had been set at work that numbed her senses. "If you forgive him now," cried her soul, "you forgive him from your weakness and not from your strength!" "Why should I delay forgiveness!" replied her senses, "it is right for me to forgive him. I love him and he knows it—that is enough."

She did not move. She felt his nearness to her—his breath upon her forehead. Blood called to blood. Templeton bent lower, he put his fingers on the white throat and felt it throb. He lifted her face towards his. She was nearly won.

Suddenly she opened her eyes and looked at him. Then she stood up, and Templeton drew back startled at what he saw in her face.

"You and I have been talking wide of the mark," she said quietly. "We have a third person to consider—Rose. What of her?"

"Why do you think of Rose at such a moment?"

"I cannot help it." Ruth leant her elbow heavily on the mantel-piece. "I forgot so much that for the moment I had forgotten her too. I was thinking only of you and me."

"I hadn't forgotten her," replied Templeton bitterly. "I never forget her. All this has happened because of her."

"She is my friend. What are you going to do with my friend?"

"Good God, Ruth! What astounding nonsense you talk! She can go back to her mother."

"To the awful life from which you rescued her?"

"Don't trouble about Rose. She will be looked after."

"While you make love to me. No, thank you, Hugh. All that is over now. You have made my duty very difficult for me. I did not know how difficult until I felt your power over me a minute ago. You are very clever. I nearly let you kiss me. I nearly yielded. If I had, you might have got your way. Who knows! I am beginning to distrust myself."

"You are talking nonsense," cried Templeton again. "All this is the result of a heated imagination!"

"On the contrary, all this is not only good sense, but the truth, and it is Rose who has helped me to it. I am very grateful to her—she will not burden you any more, for I am going to look after her myself in the future."

"You will find it a little difficult," returned Templeton grimly. "I have only to lift my finger, and Rose will fawn upon me like a spaniel. After all you have done for her she would cut you in the street if I told her to. She is the most feminine creature that ever lived, and she happens to be in love."

Ruth was silent. She suspected that Templeton spoke the truth. In the last resort, Rose, infatuated as she was, would betray her promise. She must stand alone. But her responsibility towards Templeton had lifted. He had not been fair with her. She saw now that in spite of his words she could do him little good, and she might do herself and this Rose, whom she had chosen to befriend, much harm. She felt that she could now, without disloyalty, confide in her mother. She would be obliged to tell her the truth. She had Rose to think of. The situation had grown less complicated, and she began to see light through the web of glamour that Templeton had cast about it.

"Well! So this is the end!"

She bent her head in acquiescence.

Templeton trembled with anger; he needed all his self-control to avoid some exaggerated violence. "Have you any more schemes for benefiting poor humanity in the form of Rose and myself?" he asked, sneering. "Delicious! Up to Heaven all three! Is that what you contemplated? Good-by, cousin Ruth. Don't trouble about me—I prefer my vices to your virtues, thank you—and don't trouble about Rose either; you need not provide for her. Templeton is good enough, eh? This room, your mother's, is good enough! I shall marry her. I tell you, by Heaven, I've had enough of respectable women and the deadly virtues!"

He flung out of the room and the door closed noisily behind him.

Ruth stared at the shut door. She seemed to stand in a deep silence. Her heart beat quietly and her breath came evenly, but silence had fallen upon her. Outside she heard the song of a bird and the happy cry of a child as it played by the water's edge, but these did not break the silence of her heart. She picked up a book and sat down by the open window. After a few minutes she put it down, for the words held no meaning for her. Templeton had gone—gone utterly, for the Templeton that she had loved had never even existed. He had been but a creature of her own imagination. This was worse than death, for he had never lived at all. Her love for him had lived, but now that was dead too. Dead, dead, but it was still with her; it weighed her down as a dead child weighs down the womb.

She looked vaguely at her mother's sitting room—at the great bowls of flowers, the books, the pictures. Rose Gray would rule here some day—in her mother's place, in her own place—that was what her cousin had said. She had not thought of that before. But she had tried to do what was right. "Up to God all three!" Why was that so absurd? Still she had not thought of Rose ruling at Templeton. She pressed her hands upon her forehead; she could not think and for the moment she could not pray.

"Life is very difficult," she said suddenly. An instinct told her to confide in her mother.

Chapter Eighteen

FERDINAND: I have this night digged up a Mandrake.

CARDINAL: Say you?

FERDINAND: And I am grown mad with it.

Duchess of Malfi, Act. II., Sc. V.

RUTH'S sudden departure from Trevean set Monica Holden thinking. The more she thought, the more puzzled she grew, for she could divine no cause for such impetuosity. Ruth's demeanor forbade questions.

"Don't ask me, Aunt Monica! I must go. I haven't forgotten our talk of the other night. I am not running away from duty. I am not indeed." That was all. Monica held her peace, and with the maid helped Miss Templeton to pack. She kissed her an affectionate though somewhat sad good-by, and afterwards she meditated. Something had happened between the time of Monica's leaving the cottage for Penzance and her return. But what? Ruth had done nothing but take a message to Rose Gray. Anxiety for Elizabeth's child rather than curiosity impelled Miss Holden. She put on her hat and walked down to Tremellon. She wanted to know how Ruth had looked yesterday, what she had said, and also if she had mentioned her sudden intention of leaving Cornwall.

But almost before Rose had spoken, she found additional matter for reflection. Rose was in a frame of mind with which even Monica, knowing her as well as she did, was unacquainted. She seemed to be in a strange state of suspended emotion. She hovered between smiles and tears. Sentences sprang to her lips and were checked in exit. She had a secret, and perpetually in the midst of their talk withdrew herself to look at it.

"Something has happened here too," said the wise Monica, "but what?" What indeed! The two girls were as far

asunder as the poles. The next moment, however, brought them before her in a near relation, and Monica perceived that one influence had worked on each of them according to her nature, for Rose on hearing that Ruth Templeton had left Trevean suddenly began to cry.

Miss Holden waited for the explanation of these tears, which came at last with appalling completeness. Beginning at the consequences—Ruth's unexpected departure had unnerved her and filled her with a sudden dread of discovery—Rose worked back gradually to the cause of her trouble; and at last Miss Holden held the facts of what was, after all, but a commonplace history. In spite of that, it was sufficient to fill her with a bitter dismay, and she pondered on the many lives, of whose existence Rose de Winton knew nothing, that would be affected by its recital.

When she had finished, Rose pointed to the photograph.

"That's him!" she said. "That's Mr. Templeton. You've seen it before, but isn't it—nice?"

Miss Holden's usual self-control deserted her.

"Nice!" she exclaimed. "Nice! He was engaged to marry his cousin!"

Rose's face fell into an expression very common to her of late—one of perplexity.

"What cousin?"

"Miss Ruth Templeton."

"Oh, no," she returned confidently. "I asked her."

"Asked her what?"

"If she was engaged to Mr. Templeton."

"And what did she say?" Miss Holden had a vivid recollection of her talk with Ruth only four days ago, in which she had revealed what was in fact only part of her great happiness.

"She said—'I am not the lady that is going to marry Mr. Templeton'."

A shadow of a smile lit up Monica's perplexity. She adored courage. "How like Ruth!" she said under her breath. Still she determined that the girl in front of her should know the truth. "Ruth Templeton was engaged to be married to her

cousin the day before yesterday," she said gravely. "Perhaps you told her something that altered her decision."

"Oh!" Rose's tears sprang as usual to her relief. "I can't help it!" she wailed. "It's not my fault! I wish—I could—die!"

Many times that day did she reiterate this desire; it filled the intervals in Monica's talk; it was Rose's answer to all difficulties. She was a deplorable creature—broken and weeping; she had given away her soul and her will went with it. Her soul! "'Tis laike watter in a man's dreinking cup; when he be thirsty he will dreenk that watter an' throw the cup away." Thus was one prophecy at least fulfilled, but it was an easy divination. Looking at Rose, Monica Holden, endowed only with that clairvoyance that comes from a knowledge of human nature, could have told her as much.

But the clairvoyance of experience makes always for mercy rather than condemnation. The wiser we grow the more easily we pardon, and that judgment which is as a flaming fire separating soul from spirit and flesh from bones, is then turned inwards and consumes no living creature but ourselves. To know all is to pardon all, but it is only a knowledge of the possibilities within ourselves that will inspire a living mercy towards our fellow man.

Miss Holden persuaded Rose to leave Mrs. Renowden for a time and go back with her to Trevean, where she passed a sad, strange, sleepless night in the bedroom that had been occupied by Ruth. Monica cared for her and comforted her. Rose de Winton found herself enfolded in a love that knew no limits. Bit by bit the story of her heart had followed the actual facts of her case and Monica strained Rose to a mothering bosom.

"Miss Templeton has left me too," wept the girl in conclusion.

"I doubt it," replied Monica; "wait and see."

Rose nestled to her. She opened out to the warmth of love as a flower uncurls its tendrils to the light; but through its comfort she felt the presence of something inevitable—responsibility and moral obligation in large things as well

as in small, in matters of life and death as well as in the conventions of social intercourse, things that for the first time had grown apparent to her. Without reproaching her, Monica pointed out the immediate necessity of breaking off her connection with Templeton. She urged it on no higher grounds than that of Rose's happiness. "Break with him," she said. "Break with him before he breaks with you—and in doing it breaks you."

She might as easily have attempted to hold back running water.

"But he is engaged to be married," she insisted; "you are only a burden to him. He will grow to hate you."

Rose shook her head.

"I cannot break it off. I love him. If ever he wants me I am here."

"But he doesn't want you. You are the only thing that stands between him and a happy marriage."

"When he tells me that, I will go. I wouldn't like to make him unhappy. But I can't go before; I haven't any will to go."

Monica sat helplessly staring at the girl in front of her. The soft gentle creature seemed to be made of iron. She sat huddled up on a chair, her eyes closed, her head partially thrown back, and her bright hair falling on each side of her face; she seemed to be a living replica of the Blind Love by Burne Jones, that hung on the wall behind her.

"It is harder to fight an instinct than a principle, and it is only when instinct is allied with principle that true excellence is obtained."

So said Monica's notebook. She found an exemplification of the maxim before her now. "It is not *hard* to fight an instinct," she thought to herself, "it is *impossible*! Nothing but Death will change Rose de Winton."

In this, Monica, being human and therefore fallible, erred. She had omitted from her reckoning one thing that is stronger than Death. Death is only one of the possibilities of Life. It would have been truer to say that nothing but life would change Rose de Winton. An instinct can be eradicated only

by the growth of another instinct that gradually and without demonstration may press it from existence. Sometimes the circumstances of life foster such a growth. Sometimes they do not. In the case of Rose de Winton life was busy making but to make again.

Monica's reflections were cut short by the unexpected appearance of Cherry, who panted up the garden path.

At the sight of her Rose shook like a leaf; she guessed the reason for her presence.

"Mr. Gray be coom up to Tremellon, an' he du be asking fur 'ee," said Cherry, holding her side with both hands. "I never saw 'un in such a taking. I runned the whole way oop past the bee butts to find 'ee, and it have paid me fine. It don't du to run against the wind."

But Rose ran with the wind. She hardly stopped to take her hat. Once outside the cottage she caught at Cherry's hand and the two girls ran together.

Monica watched them from her window, and as she watched, a petition went up to Heaven: It was the first prayer that had ever been prayed for Rose de Winton.

Rose stopped running before she reached Tremellon. She walked slowly for some distance to get her breath. Then she sent Cherry on and sat down upon a large stone at the top of the steps that led towards the cottage. Her heart beat frightfully, and a joy that was pain surged through her. She looked down at the pink cotton dress she wore and wondered if Templeton would like it. She smoothed her hair and pulled it about her ears, for she remembered that he had admired it so. Then she walked on quietly.

The cottage door was shut. As she touched the handle she discovered that she could not control the trembling of her limbs; her lips twitched involuntarily; she hoped that he would not question her, for she could not have answered him. There was no sound. Neither Mrs. Renowden nor Cherry were anywhere near. She passed into the sitting room. Templeton stood with his back to her, looking up at the picture by Leighton over the sideboard. Through the open window the sun threw the cliffs into high relief against the

blue. He turned. She saw that his face was furrowed and his eyes bloodshot; they blazed at her. He was evidently under the influence of strong excitement.

"Well, Rose! I've come back to see the play out! There, stand still just as you are. You shall have what you wanted!" He came behind her, pulled her to him roughly and held her. Then he laughed and bent his face, touching her shoulder. "Wedded!" he exclaimed, "just like the picture! Isn't that what you wanted? Here we stand—like the Leighton—the ideal of the middle classes." He pulled his arm from her breast and waved it above his head. "By God, we'll be respectable yet!"

The girl shivered and tried to wrench herself from his embrace, but he held her against his body as in a vise. Straining her to him he lifted her face and pressed kisses upon her frightened lips.

She panted from fear, for it seemed as though she were in the grasp of a man who had suddenly gone mad.

"Let me go, Hugh!" she whispered. "Let me go." He stopped her words by more rough kisses pressed painfully upon her mouth and throat. He hurt her physically, but it wasn't for that reason that she covered her eyes.

"Little fool," he said at last, loosening his hold. "I'll marry you!"

He walked towards the window. The joke was so huge it made him laugh. "What a wooing! If I'd behaved like that to the other I'd have had her by this time—had her, by Jove, in the hollow of my hand! 'A woman, a dog——' What's the rest?" He looked out at the quiet bay and Tremellon nestling under the cliffs. There was no sound but the beating of the waves outside, and inside—Rose sobbing. She had fallen into a chair and lay there inertly. Templeton crossed the room and looked down upon her.

"You shouldn't cry like that when you've just received a proposal," he said gravely. "Aren't you glad?"

Rose could not speak; the storm of her crying was at its height; she nodded her head.

"So glad, eh?"

She made a movement towards him, caught his hand and pressed it to her breast.

Templeton laughed again, and crossing to the glass looked at himself. His face was several shades redder than usual; his wrinkles had deepened and his mouth and the lines about it had slackened, or so it seemed; the wild beast in him had slipped its leash, and the self-controlled Epicurean shrank away before it. He was quick to note the change in himself; it startled him.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed. "Emotions are dangerous things! My dear Rose," he went on, reverting to his usual suave tones, "events have made me forget myself. The last two days have not brought the philosophic mind. I am not yet acquainted with myself as a bridegroom. Now stop being absurd—there's nothing to cry about, you're a very lucky girl—and tell me how I look."

Rose wiped her eyes obediently and sat up; she still struggled with a few stray sobs.

"You look—different."

"And so do you. We are both going to be married, you see; it has had an awful effect on our appearances. Run away and wash your face and make yourself look pretty and then come down and talk quietly. It's time we had some quiet. By the way," he looked at his watch, "I hope lunch won't be late, for I breakfasted early in Penzance."

Rose learnt that he had left London late the day before and had arrived at Penzance in the early morning. "A day too late!" he added grimly.

She questioned him.

"I mean that it would have pleased me better if I had asked you to be my wife yesterday instead of to-day. Eh? There is something nice for you to think about!"

A smile dawned slowly in Rose's face. His wife! She had not yet fully comprehended the meaning of those words. His wife! Ah, a great joy quickened in her. All her emotions to-day had become intensified—she was awakened suddenly from a comatose condition and was living to the utmost—anguish, suspense, fear, joy—she had experienced all, and she felt

now that she could scarcely bear the happiness that crowned them. His wife! She laughed a little low laugh that bubbled in her throat. Her tears were all wiped away now and forgotten. She lifted her hands suddenly with a quick gesture as though to dispel the horror that had closed upon her. Then she ran to him as in old times and seated herself upon the arm of his chair. She drew his face to hers with both hands and imprinted a timid kiss upon the lips. Laughing, with the tears still hanging on her lashes, Rose seemed to have become once more the embodiment of youth and spring-time. Her glad, quick, half shy movements suggested the frolic of lambs, kittens, or very young children. She was soft like them, and like them extraordinarily full of life which expressed itself in vital movement. Finding that he did not resist her, Rose grew bolder. She smoothed out his wrinkles with her finger tips until he laughed again, but more sanely. A request, however, for a timetable brought her to her feet.

"Oh!" she cried in dismay, "are you going away?"

"We are both going away!" he returned grimly. "We are going to Italy. Six weeks ago I swore to pass my honeymoon in Italy." His excitement returned, and a flicker of the dying blaze shone again in his eyes. "Six weeks ago, by Heaven—I mean to keep my word."

Spoken words are never lost. They sink into the mind below the region of sensibility, and at the critical moment rise to embarrass and distract. Thus Rose became suddenly aware of an earlier conversation with Miss Holden. "He is engaged to marry his cousin. He does not love you. You are the only thing that stands between him and a happy marriage." Three weeks ago he had planned his honeymoon—but with whom?

"You were going to marry Miss Templeton then!" said Rose slowly. She stood with downcast eyes, fingering the tablecloth.

"So you appear to have discovered—and to some purpose!" Rising anger fanned Templeton's resentment. Rose had no business to speak of that; shame for her part in the business should have kept her silent. At the thought the savage beast

within him leapt again to life. Another paroxysm of fury threatened, but Rose was too preoccupied with her own thoughts to notice it.

"You deserve to be beaten, not kissed, for the part you played in that business!" said Templeton in a low voice. "When I think of the diabolical mischief you made, I go nearly mad. What devil possessed you? Yet I kiss you! What a queer world!"

Rose remained silent; up and down her fingers traced the pattern of the tablecloth.

"You—you loved Miss Templeton?"

He laughed again. "If you ask those sort of questions you will hurt yourself more than I should hurt you if I beat you."

But Rose persisted. "You did love her."

"Yes."

Rose drew a long, shivering breath. "And you love her still?"

"Yes—curse her!"

"And you will always love her!"

"God or the devil knows! I don't think it likely—But it isn't the real thing unless one is fool enough to think it's going to last. Look here, Rose. I am going to marry you. You are going to be my wife. Isn't that enough? Some day you will be Lady Templeton. Some day you will live in Miss Ruth's home and have the sublime satisfaction of kicking her out of it into the street."

Rose ceased the mechanical tracing of circles. She drew back her hand quickly and lifted her eyelids. Her face fluttered as though blown by a breeze. Joy had turned to the wild misery of jealousy, but his last words had overtaken it with a wilder fear.

"What do you mean?" The new dread showed itself in eyes and lips. She trembled for his reply.

"What do I mean? What I say. To turn a rival out of house and home—isn't that enough joy for a woman? Something to live for, eh? Better than sticking pins into her in her drawing room, isn't it? Don't you see Templeton comes to me

at my uncle's death? Ruth won't have me because of you—curse you! But you shall have Templeton because of me—bless you! There's a topsy-turvy state of things—and you, my adorable one, Rose, daughter of Rosalie, come on top. Rose Templeton—Ruth Templeton—not so much difference! Not so much difference in appearance either! The devil's in the thing! Now for God's sake go and pack before I kiss you or beat you, I don't much care which—but I won't take you to Italy with me dressed in pink cotton!”

But Rose stood still. The gray fear that stretching from her heart had blanched her face now touched her limbs, and she shook as though with ague. But for the first time it was neither for herself nor for her lover that she suffered.

“I cannot do it!” Her words came huskily.

“Do what?”

“Live at Templeton!”

“You can't marry me unless you live at Templeton——”

“Then—I can't marry you.”

The air grew dense. Rose held on to the table, and for the moment she seemed to be but a futile piece of life quivering in the void. “I am a mistake!” cried out her soul. “I have dropped here somehow accidentally. Tread on me and crush me.” Then she returned to the world and looked up. Templeton lay back in his chair; his eyes were half closed. Rose was conscious of them under his lids, like fire. She was fascinated by them. He moved his head softly from side to side. He held her as a snake holds a little animal. Then he laughed.

“Rose, you'll make me fall in love with you if you don't look out, and what a surprise that would be for both of us! As a matter of fact,” he continued meditatively, “I don't know that I should want you if I fell in love with you—it would be another set of emotions—a different story. Anyhow, don't become elusive—it's contrary to your nature, which is as dull as respectability. You are only a lamb in a wolf's dress, my dear! A little edition of the Ten Commandments with a French name! Brixton in Bohemia—pish! my metaphors become nauseous! Why won't you marry me?”

"Because—she was—good to me. She kissed me. We were both—so lonely. I said that—I would love her."

Templeton drew a cigarette case from his pocket and selected a cigarette. He put a match to it and smoked.

"The ways of women are most wonderful to me," he said slowly. "Yea, more wonderful are they than—so you two agreed to throw me over! Was that it?"

"No—I didn't know that—she—was the lady. I didn't know until Miss Holden told me. But I couldn't take her place. I couldn't live in her home and turn her out. I couldn't. I couldn't. I would rather——"

"What?"

There was silence.

"What?"

"Give—you—up."

Then the storm broke.

"By God!" cried Templeton, springing to his feet. "You shall!"

The hell of the last twenty-four hours was let loose within him. His face, red before, was purple now. There was no trace of the gentle poet, the calm philosopher, the whimsical and charming moralist, the schoolmaster; his whole body was distorted by the violence of his passion. He drew his breath thickly through nose and closed teeth at once. "I'll—I'll—here, get out of my way, or I'll do you a hurt! I'll——" He got no further.

With her hands pressed against her heart, Rose dropped upon the ground before him like a stone.

When she opened her eyes Templeton was moving about in the bedroom overhead. She lay quite still, for she had only regained partial consciousness. Something warm trickled down her cheek; she wondered dimly what it was; it reached her mouth, and tasted warm and salt. Then she put up her fingers and touched it. They were red and sticky when she drew them back. In falling she had knocked her head against the leg of the sideboard, and the blood now trickled slowly down her face and neck.

She looked at her red fingers. She thought vaguely that

she must wash them. Blood was very nasty—Mr. Templeton could not bear the sight of blood. But not yet—not yet—she was so tired, and it was so nice to lie quite still. She shut her eyes again, but the trickle continued and soon she felt the lace at her throat grow wet and cold. At the same moment she became aware of a dull ache in her head. She pulled herself into complete consciousness from the outskirts of life. Ah, the pain of it! The stupor had passed, and it seemed as though some ghostly surgeon's knife dissected her soul. It was unbearable; a scream rose shuddering to her lips, but she stifled it to a moan. Hugh would be angry with her if she screamed. Hugh, ah, Hugh! She might never see him again, and it was her own act that had decreed this tragedy. But the thing was impossible—unthinkable. Miss Templeton would not have given her a knife with which to cut out her heart. This was worse. She could not bear it—she could not bear it—she was so afraid—so terribly afraid of pain.

She sat up, and the blood trickled over her face; it dropped into her lap and made great patches of red on her pink dress. She wondered how she looked, and if, when Hugh came in to say good-by, he would think her very ugly. She pulled herself up by the table, held on to it and reached the mirror. She was hideous. Her face had gray shadows about it and was dabbled in blood; her lips were faintly purple; she was like a corpse. What could she do to bring him back to her? She was so ugly. He would want her to laugh—to be gay and sweet and fragrant, so that he might hold her in his arms and feel the thrill of her warm flesh. And she—she thought that she was dying. Little use to ask for mercy—men were not won in that way. They were won by mocking smiles, and—flight. What man would want to pursue a woman dabbled in tears and blood?

Then the pain struck her soul again and in its agony her will died. All her life was towards the man she loved; she could fight no longer, she could not even think. All the power within her went on in one supreme desire. She moved unsteadily to the staircase.

"Hugh!" she gasped, "Hugh!" There was no answer.

Her knees gave way under her and she fell upon the stairs, but clutched the banisters to save herself. The touch of the wooden railing helped her; she grasped it with all her might—it was something palpable in the midst of fog. She needed all her physical strength now to prevent a return of the faintness. Darkness surrounded her and in the midst of it she battled to hold her consciousness. Hold it she must! This was the supreme moment of her life to lose or win—to lose or win!

“Hugh!” she called.

Then the door opened—oh, blessed moment! He stood upon the stairs.

“Hugh! Forgive me. Take me with you! I will do anything you like. I love you—ah God—I love you!”

He was dressed for travelling. Half unconsciously she noted the thick overcoat, the rugs, the portmanteau. She might have been with him—she might have been with him for ever and ever but for a woman to whom she had scarcely spoken. She made one last effort.

“I hate her, Hugh,” she wailed. “I hate her. She doesn’t love you and—she hurt me so. I don’t mind what you do to her. Oh, love, love, take me with you.”

Templeton came downstairs quickly, but she threw herself against him, holding him by the knees. She buried her face in the folds of his overcoat and left there stains of blood. “Don’t kill me, Hugh!” she gasped. “I love you.”

Without a word Templeton unclasped the clinging hands; it took him all his strength to do it; her fingers were locked in one another and seemed like links of iron. At the touch he experienced a quick revulsion of desire and knew he loathed her; she had become horrible to him. He never looked at her face or knew that she was blood-stained, although he carried traces now upon his own hands. Had he looked at her the sight would have remained with him. He went into the sitting room, poured out a glass of whisky, and swallowed it.

“Saved!” he said under his breath. “Saved by a fluke! God is good and woman is the devil! Here endeth—for ever and ever. Amen.”

He wrote a check for twenty pounds, and left it on the table.

When he came out of the room Rose was still lying upon the stairs. He did not know if she was shamming or if she had really fainted. He rang the bell for Mrs. Renowden to attend to her.

Then he passed out of the house. The education of Rose de Winton was ended.

BOOK II

Chapter Nineteen

"If each things end doe each things worth expresse
What is manes life, but wayne unperfectness
How swifte rune we to our fatall ende
Weh have no hope if death be not our frende."

Inscription in Bere Regis Church, 1596.

ALL Sir Raymond's characteristics, both of body and soul, he included under the generic name of Templeton. He had not only the Templeton nose, but he had the true Templeton reserve. It was the Templeton humor that could laugh at a Templeton joke, and the Templeton magnanimity that could forgive his wife, who was, unfortunately for her, a Templeton only by marriage. At present, a Templeton rage swept over the household. Elizabeth shut herself into her own room and sorrowed, but Ruth, after the manner of the young, dealt out criticism.

"I don't mind his being angry," she explained to her mother, "if he would be angry with the right person. But he is not angry with Hugh; he is angry with you and me. At the bottom of his heart he thinks that Hugh has had to contend with a great misfortune. He talks of my egregious headlong folly in breaking off the engagement. He pities Hugh; he is angry with us."

Had Elizabeth replied she might have explained that the Templeton anger and the Templeton pity seldom fell upon the right person. Shortsight was a Templeton characteristic. No member of that family ever saw beyond his own personal desires, and justice requires a wider vision. But Elizabeth did not reply. She had purchased the power of silence too dearly to throw it away.

Of course Sir Raymond was angry with Hugh also—very angry. His conduct was unworthy of a Templeton. He was guilty of the unforgivable sin—that of being found out. "A fool," according to Sir Raymond, "shall be punished more

severely than a knave: and he who is found out forfeits honor and riches." "There is no place on the earth for the foolish man: the virtuous and the wicked are leagued together against him."

But the fact that Hugh's place was no longer at Templeton galled Sir Raymond, and his rage fell upon his wife and daughter. The only person who brought him tranquillity was Mrs. Whitter, and she, in response to an urgent appeal, had arrived at Templeton almost immediately after the catastrophe. The story he had to tell tickled her to laughter, but she kept her merriment to herself. She dealt with the situation perfectly, for she brought to Sir Raymond not only sympathy, which any commonplace woman might have done, but admiration, which was more effective. The baronet had never fully realized his own fortitude, patience, and generosity, until Pansy came to show them to him. She healed him with her praises, she cheered him with her hopefulness.

"Wait and see what happens," she counseled. "These things blow over! Ruth is in love; she will not be angry for ever. And you—you are so noble, if he were penitent you would forgive him."

"Yes," said Sir Raymond, "I would forgive him. In fact, I have already done so. I cannot forget that some day he will come into this property. But then there is Elizabeth——"

"Ah!" sighed Pansy. "Good women are so hard!"

"Not all good women," returned Sir Raymond gently.

He took her hand as he spoke, and raised it to his lips. Pansy blushed, and when she raised her eyes they were moist. With a strangled sigh Sir Raymond turned away.

Ruth and her mother now, as before the advent of Hugh Templeton, looked to each other almost entirely for society.

But in Ruth's heart a new terror was gradually dawning. It had seemed to her during the last few weeks that a subtle change had taken place in Lady Templeton, a change that, unnoticed by her daughter, engrossed in her more personal troubles, might have begun months ago. She could not tell; but it had now become suddenly and terribly apparent. Ruth blamed herself, and watched her mother narrowly. The fair

face was more waxen, the hands more transparent, the threads of gray in the light hair had multiplied all at once, it seemed, to patches, and the color of the hair itself was dim and dead. Many small activities which before had occupied a great part of Lady Templeton's life had dropped from her. She had grown more gentle, more silent, and at the same time, almost apathetic. For hours she lay in her lounge chair by the window, or upon the sofa in her own room. Her outlook on the world seemed to have changed, and things that before had appealed to her imperatively as duties no longer concerned her. A certain detachment grew in her—the detachment that seen in the lives of saints and holy people draws from the common world an alien admiration; and as Ruth watched it, she felt as though a hand tightened upon her. She was with her mother for the greater part of the day. The couple still had their daily reading, but the embroidery frame was now laid by. Lady Templeton seemed to be too tired even to pull the silk backwards and forwards.

One morning Ruth had just put down the book, and Elizabeth lay back smiling, with closed eyes.

"Read the last paragraph again," she said suddenly. Ruth turned over the pages of the Browning she held in her hand and read once more of how Lazarus, returned from the dead, saw the world with changed eyes.

"Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing Heaven,
The man is witless of the size, the sum,
The value of proportion of all things,
Or whether it be little or be much.
Discourse to him of prodigious armaments
Assembled to besiege his city now,
And of the passing of a mule with gourds,
'Tis one
Should his child sicken unto death—why look
For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,
Or pretermission of the daily craft!
While a word, gesture, glance from that same child,
At play or in the school or laid asleep,
Will startle him to an agony of fear.
He holds on firmly to some thread of life
Which runs across some vast distracting orb
Of glory on the either side that meagre thread
Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet."

The girl stopped. "I don't quite understand it," she said, "do you?"

But her mother lay with closed eyes.

"It is only from the darkness of the valley of death that we can see the stars plainly," she said, in a low voice, as though talking to herself. "Lazarus lived in their full light."

Ruth's suspicions met her words in a quick prescience of coming trouble. She fell upon her knees beside the couch.

"What do you mean, my dearest, what do you mean?"

Her mother laid a hand upon the brown head.

"I only mean what I say, beloved. In the common daylight, we are absorbed in the shows of life and lose the truth. Lazarus, who saw all, took things in their right proportion."

"But us—you and me!" cried Ruth, in terror, "how does this apply? And what do you mean by the valley of death? Why do you talk in allegories? If you have anything to tell me, tell me plainly."

Her manner was almost rough; she held her mother's hand with a fierce tenderness.

"I will tell you some day," replied Elizabeth gently, "but now—ah! my dear, I know all that is in your heart—all that you have against Hugh, even against your father! But do not judge; do not judge any human being. You cannot know all the facts of their lives, and it is only in knowing everything that you can form a conclusion."

But the words that had filled Ruth with apprehension were not explained.

"What did you mean by the other—the dark shadow?" she persisted.

"I meant that it is only from that standpoint that we can see," replied her mother. "And when we see, we have only tears, not judgment, for the people who have hurt us. Judgment!" She changed her position, and sat up suddenly, pressing her hands to her forehead. It seemed as though, apart from Ruth, she had some private reason for her emotion. "Judgment! How impossible! How mad! Here, we are all struggling painfully and we are all linked together. Sometimes we suffer wrong, and sometimes we do wrong. God

grant that we may be allowed only to suffer it, for"—she gave to every slow word its due weight—"for that is not vouchsafed to all men by their own natures and the nature of circumstance. Those who do the wrong need the pity."

She stopped, for a servant opened the door and announced Dr. Trelling.

When Robert left Lady Templeton's room an hour later the sight of his face increased Ruth's apprehension.

"Mother has been talking to you!" she cried.

He bent his head. "Your mother is very ill, Ruth. I have telephoned for Hawley and Sir Benjamin Reade. I can find nothing organically wrong with her, and yet she is growing feebler every moment. There is no time to be lost."

Ruth hid her face in her hands. During the last few weeks she had made the discovery that pain has many forms, and can change from one to another in the twinkling of an eye.

"Is there nothing that we can do?" she said in a low voice.

"That is what I want to know," replied Robert. "I can suggest nothing. She is wasting away before our eyes!" He got up, and walked backwards and forwards miserably. "It is horrible—and we can do nothing. We know nothing—nothing."

Ruth wept silently as he continued. "Think of all we have discovered about specific disease! We pull people out of the very grave. We trace their fevers to the bite of a fly. We discover a living fungus in the blood that is responsible for a deadly illness. We cure poison by poison. Soon there will be no more diphtheria, consumption, or scarlet fever in the world. The thing is inevitable. Science never errs. And then suddenly we are foiled! We know nothing. We come across a case like this where no part of the body but the life itself is sick, and—great Heavens! what is the life itself? We do not know. We do not know how it came to be, what it is, or where it tends. It is mystery!"

He continued his walk in silence. Then he stopped, and sat down quietly by Ruth.

"If I only had a clue! Are you sure—quite sure—that she

has had no shock? It looks to me like a decline resulting from some great mental catastrophe. The nerve centers are injured; she has had some mortal blow; she doesn't want to live. Is there nothing that you know of?"

"Nothing," said Ruth drearily. "She has had a worry—a surprise—but nothing that could account for what you describe."

"You do not think that it was the"—he hesitated—"the breaking off of your engagement?"

"I am perfectly certain it wasn't," Ruth spoke positively. "That was a trouble to her—in a way; it was not a great trouble. I think she was glad that I broke it off."

Trelling knew from previous conversations with Elizabeth on this subject that Ruth had rightly interpreted her mother's feeling, but he was naturally unacquainted with the details of what had taken place at Templeton during his absence, although he had heard with a surprised thankfulness that the engagement was at an end. Yet he was right. Something had happened—he did not know the truth. Only Elizabeth Templeton herself and one other person knew the truth.

Ruth sat in silence, her face hidden by her hands. Tears trickled through her fingers. When Trelling rose to go she made a furtive helpless movement in his direction—her hand half extended and then withdrawn.

"Don't go, Robert," she said under her breath. "You are a comfort to me; it is difficult—I——"

Again she moved in his direction; her hand pleaded with him. He returned, laid his fingers gently upon it, and together silent they sat hand in hand. Her pain was such that she did not realize him even as a fellow creature—only as a force that prevented her from falling.

The result of the doctors' consultation was much as Robert had predicted. There was no organic disease, but a gradual failure of all functions. Unless the patient took a rapid turn for the better this could end in one way only. The household lived under the shadow of death, and even Mrs. Whitter for the time being went softly.

Trelling remained on at Templeton, but he saw very little of Ruth, who spent all her time in the sick room. He insisted, however, upon her daily walk, and almost unconsciously Ruth had begun to obey him. Sometimes he accompanied her, and together they wandered to the village or else to the woods, where scarcely a leaf remained. As the trees showed withered skeletons, so the evergreens grew brighter, and the fallen leaves accumulated upon the paths. Dawn and twilight were heavy with autumn mists, and indoors great logs once more blazed in the Templeton fireplaces. On one such misty afternoon Ruth sat with her mother in her own room. The firelight sparkled on the delicate walls with their rosy festoons, the burning logs sent up flames of blue and green. Lilies and other hot-house flowers added scent and brightness. Elizabeth lay on the sofa in a white wrapper; and as her fair head rested against the rose color of the sofa cushion, she seemed scarcely human, so delicate and fragile had she grown. Mother and daughter rested in silence, watching the fire.

At last Elizabeth spoke. Her face had grown intent. It seemed as though her mind was busy with some complication. She called her daughter to her, and Ruth drew a footstool up to the couch.

"What is it, darling?" she asked.

Of late their relations had become reversed, and Ruth was a strong protector, while Elizabeth, in her frailty, seemed like a little child. It was some time before she spoke again; she seemed to be collecting her thoughts towards a difficult utterance.

When it came, Ruth listened in surprise, for her mother was unlike herself; her words were ambiguous and her manner extraordinarily agitated. By dint, however, of many questions, she learned that Lady Templeton was troubling herself over what was presumably one of her many charities. She had lately—quite lately—heard of a young girl three years older than Ruth whom she desired to help; and in the event of anything happening to her, she wished Monica Holden to undertake the charge. That was all. It was quite ordinary and commonplace. Her mother was interested in so many young

girls that Ruth could find nothing in her story to account for her emotion; she was forced to attribute it to bodily weakness, and soothed and comforted her as best she could.

"I cannot tell you why," said Elizabeth, "but this trust is a sacred one. This girl has a claim upon me. I——" She paused for want of breath.

Ruth tried to turn away her thoughts from the subject, which in some strange way had become a painful one. But Elizabeth held to it obstinately.

"I must talk about it," she said; "I must. Her mother came to see me the other day," she went on hurriedly. "I didn't know of her existence before—she wanted money. She—she is not a good woman. I have never seen the girl, but I would like her taken away from the mother, if possible. She is over age, she can choose for herself. I want you to tell Monica. There is no one else I could ask, or I would not talk about it to you. And you and she—you must keep the secret always—always, do you hear? You must find this girl and help her, but nobody must know—nobody must know!"

She leant back exhausted, and Ruth saw that great beads of sweat stood out and trickled down her forehead. Her distress grew, for she felt that such a strain would most surely injure her mother in her weak condition.

"Promise," said Lady Templeton, in a whisper which was scarcely audible.

"Dearest," said Ruth, almost hurt by her pertinacity, "of course I promise—I swear to keep my promise. Why should I talk about this girl? Aunt Monica and I will never talk about her either to each other or to other people. She will be dead as far as we are concerned."

Elizabeth stroked her daughter's hand. A few minutes later, recovering somewhat, she drew a small bunch of keys from a bag at her side. She selected one with difficulty, and handed it to her daughter. It fitted a drawer in her writing table which held some important papers. When Ruth handed them to her she drew out a half sheet that had an address written upon it sideways in a large but illegible handwriting.

"Here it is," she said in a whisper. "Mrs. de Winton, 10

Princes Street, W. That is where the girl lives. Her name is Rose de Winton. I have—I mean—if necessary—there is a sufficient sum of money for Monica—I have left it—she will not be hampered—but she must get the girl away. It is my responsibility—I——” Then her thought took a sudden flight. “You are to do nothing yourself, Ruth,” she said quickly; “you are too young. Monica is to do it all. You are not even to see her—you—you mustn’t meet. Oh! God—God!” As though the force of her own thought was too much for her, Lady Templeton lay back among her cushions, sobbing violently.

Ruth was deeply distressed. The sense of her own impotence appalled her. By degrees, however, the paroxysm passed, and Lady Templeton’s habitual peace, momentarily interrupted, returned. But she was left shattered by the effort of her demand.

Trelling and Sir Raymond carried her to bed, and the next day found her too feeble to get up. As her weakness increased, so also, it seemed to Ruth, did her sweetness and her joy. The girl found it not far-fetched to think that she had already passed from death to life. The old Rector of Templeton visited her daily, and Ruth remained by her bedside for many hours reading to her, or else sitting in silence holding her hand. Her strange happiness wrung the hearts of all who loved her, but it diffused a new and holier atmosphere at Templeton. She was in everybody’s thoughts. Strong, subtle, and sure, her gentle personality had informed her household.

The days passed, and the final issue, in spite of the most skillful medical service in the world, grew more assured. At last the hour struck, and, in spite of intermittent pain, consequent on her extreme weakness, the day had been one of joy. She retained consciousness, but it seemed that the things of the flesh faded and the things of the spirit took form and substance.

Outside in the corridor the servants stood in silent groups, some crying, and all under the influence of a mournful excitement, while inside the room her family sat and waited. The Baronet had taken up his position at the bedside; he had

sat there for hours; he would neither eat nor sleep. He sat in one position gazing at his wife, and dropping furtive tears. Ruth had no tears to shed; she did not resent her father's presence, she was not conscious of it. All her desire was centered in the white delicate figure lying in apparent rest. Occasionally Elizabeth's eyes rested on her husband, more often on her daughter, and she had asked for Robert Trelling when she found him absent. She had, as though in prescience of the coming event, put all in order, and the letter requested of Ruth had already reached Monica Holden. She never told Sir Raymond of the strange visit she had received; had she done so, no good could have come of it and it was always her habit to spare him pain. Even at this moment, when she was nearing death, it hurt her to think that he must remain to bear the pang alone, for Death to Sir Raymond was a thing supremely awful, it meant only blackness, worms, and desolation. Elizabeth knew this, and even with the cold hand at her very throat, she grieved with his tempestuous sorrow.

"We ought to have gone together, Elizabeth," he wept. "I cannot bear it! I cannot bear it! I should have died first."

Elizabeth pressed his hand; she was too weak to speak. She smiled. For her husband's sake, she would rob even this horror of its ugliness.

Trelling, at the end of the bed, looked on in an agony of grief and astonished rage.

"My God! she is apologizing to him for her own death!" he exclaimed inwardly. "And I shouldn't wonder if he hadn't killed her, if the truth were known. There has been something that has violently affected her—her nervous system is shattered—some shock! I could swear to it."

Just before the end she motioned to Trelling.

"Kiss me, Robert," she said. "Your friendship has been a precious thing in my life."

Silently he stooped and kissed her, and then he knelt by the bedside.

Her last words were for Ruth.

"Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, no good-by for you."

Then her lips moved again in the prayer that was to her as constant as breathing.

"Thou hast made us for Thyself,"—Ruth, bending over her, caught a whisper here and there,—*"and restless shall we be—until we find our rest in Thee."*

Then there was silence.

Sir Raymond burst out into loud hysterical weeping. The Templeton self-control had deserted him.

"Elizabeth! Elizabeth!" He clutched the bedclothes, and implored her to remain. *"You shall not die, Elizabeth!"*

But his wife was beyond his reach. One more convulsive flutter, another sigh, and the fair head dropped backward. For the first time, Lady Templeton did not respond to her husband's call.

Sir Raymond stood up. He looked about him with dazed eyes. Then suddenly he realized that a person who for more than twenty years had stood between him and the troubles of life was no more. His grief was indeed greater than he could bear.

"How can I live without her!" he said, vaguely looking round the room and addressing himself to nobody in particular.

As he received no reply, he went downstairs to pour out his soul to Mrs. Whitter.

One of the strangest things in the presence of death is the inevitable routine of the business life. Our heart is torn from us, and laid in a new-made grave, and yet our meals are served punctually, our daily paper waits, and the postman does not fail to bring us the usual irrelevant letters. All goes on as before, while we are left stunned and blinking at the inconsequence of habit.

Even while Lady Templeton breathed her last the postman delivered letters at Templeton Manor, and one of these letters was for Ruth.

She opened it on the following day mechanically, for so bewildered was she that even the shining of the sun had become to her a strange thing.

It was from Monica Holden. She glanced dully down the first page, which was full of sympathy for her mother's illness—sympathy which at this moment had no power to lighten her grief.

Then her attention was arrested by a name—Rose de Winton.

That was the name of the girl whom Monica was to search out and befriend in obedience to her mother's last command. Rose de Winton!—she read on, and then something stirred in her that stopped her breath.

"Rose de Winton," wrote Miss Holden, "and Rose Gray are the same person. She told me her real name some time ago, but I did not mention the matter to you, as I did not think it important. How did your mother come across her? The main fact about her, however, at present, is that she is nowhere to be found. She disappeared from Tremellon about the time you went home, leaving no address, and taking nothing with her but a small hand-bag. Mrs. Renowden is dreadfully distressed, because she had grown devoted to poor Rose. I put the matter into the hands of the police at once, and as soon as I got your letter, I sent to 10 Princes Street. However, Mrs. de Winton (an awful woman) disclaims all knowledge of her, and appears to have cast her off in some anger. She has entirely vanished. I will let you know directly we have found her."

Then, as though the matter were of secondary importance, the letter dealt with other subjects, but Ruth did not read on to the end. A vision of a flowery, fire-lighted room, and her mother's face fair and grief-stricken, but touched with the unearthly light of noble sacrifice, rose before her; and with it, another figure—that of a creature—timid, pathetic, primitive, fawn-like in its blind and pitiless instinct—yet, withal, a laughing human child, and a woman capable—if her heart were but moved—of the heroic virtues—Rose de Winton. She stood out vividly, she forced herself upon the consciousness.

"You must have been very unhappy; I am so glad that we are friends." Those were her last words to Ruth, and in them,

and in succeeding circumstances, the girl found a double tie. The relief from long brooding over her sorrow saved her. She rose up from reading Monica's letter with a new hold on life, for it had given her something to do.

"I will find Rose de Winton," she said aloud. "I swear I will find Rose de Winton."

Then in obedience to a growing need in her life, she went in search of Robert Trelling.

Chapter Twenty

"Life never has its true proportion until we reckon with death: Self is a disease until we reckon with God."—*The Thoughts of Monica Holden.*

THE true history of the life of any human creature is a history of movement, and can only be shown by a series of flashlights. The character changes as we touch it, although the essence of the soul remains the same. It is only in change that there is life; where there is rest there is death. As we stand on a few inches of earth it is changing beneath our feet, and we with it—or we are not human. We exist together in the crucible of God, which is God Himself. A philosopher once propounded to the ancient world his doctrine of the Perpetual Flux, and against it another set forth his vision of the Unchanging Reality. The truth is in both. This paradox of the changing and the stable is present in all created things—in the merest beggar of the street—in our unhappy Rose de Winton. Let Rose de Winton serve as an example, and in her life, as in that of the beggar, we might find not only the whole history of the race, but of every philosophy that has ever engaged mankind; in Rose de Winton's heart we could discover the impulse of every religion that has ever moved the hearts of saints; in Rose de Winton's weak and wounded soul (taken in its entirety, its origin and destiny made clear) we could discern, had we but the eyes to see, the final revelation of the mystery of God.

So the history of Rose de Winton is not a thing to be treated lightly. It is the history of a human creature, and the bare facts of such a history should make a net to hold the creature body and soul, if only for an instant, to our view. But the facts must be chronicled accurately. Only in truth can the soul show itself, and truth is always changing. There-

fore many pictures are needed, all different, but all veritable. Nothing but the fidelity of the artist's line to the visible can hold the soul—the invisible.

“ . . . Have you noticed now
Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk
And trust me but you should though! How much more
If I drew higher things with the same truth?”

And so, if this chronicle of Rose de Winton's history be faithful to actual facts of life, it will show a pitiful woman of clean soul, firm flesh, and warm blood, lovable, unloved, and deeply hurt in living.

When Templeton left her, night descended upon Rose. It is a merciful law which decrees that all pain, both physical and mental, shall, after a certain point reached, destroy itself. When the mind has grown unreceptive and the nerves blunt, nothing more can for the moment touch the body or the soul. They are left to rest. Rose awoke to her life as one might wake in a dream, finding a thick mist about her, but not greatly wondering how it came to be, or how she came to be enveloped in it. She opened her eyes on the following day at the usual hour, rose, dressed, and breakfasted. She was conscious of yesterday's events, but these did not trouble her painfully; also insensibly she knew herself to be physically ill, but she did not ponder that matter either. Mrs. Renowden, watching her, found her quieter and somewhat vacant. She was like a person walking, talking, and living asleep. The landlady had strapped and bandaged her forehead the day before; it had bled unreasonably, for the wound was no more than skin deep, and when the bandage was removed, her thick hair covered the place. She paid Mrs. Renowden with the money that Templeton had left upon the table.

“And now, please,” she said, breaking in upon the old woman's expressions of gratitude, “will you send Cherry into Tremellon for Gannet's pony chaise, as I want to get to Penzance in time to catch the mid-day train to London.”

Her voice echoed the repose of her soul—a repose that was like a shadow cast by death—and Mrs. Renowden, discerning

in her a new dignity, checked her voluble tongue, and went off to do as she was bid.

After she had gone, Rose, full of calculations, held her purse for one moment open in her hand. The chaise paid for, and her ticket taken to London, one shilling and ninepence would remain. It was not a great sum to face the world with—Templeton would have been the first to acknowledge that. She concluded rightly that he had miscalculated the extent of the landlady's account. However, there was nothing to be done. She packed a small black bag, put on a plain hat and traveling cloak, and stood ready for her journey.

Then Mrs. Renowden could control herself no longer. Yesterday she had found Rose alone fainting upon the stairs, and from that had drawn conclusions—conclusions which were wide of the truth. Her disquiet took the form of an undue and difficult cheerfulness.

"You du belong tu be back sune?" she said tentatively. "You du sure-ly? With all they faine zukky claithes in the coopboard." Her geniality obviously cost her an effort.

Rose shook her head slowly.

"I shall never come back, Mrs. Renowden. Cherry can have the clothes."

Mrs. Renowden laughed uneasily, hardly noticing the last part of the remark, until Cherry's ruddy face, half incredulous, half eager, with the great eyes wide open, brought her back to actualities. She grew annoyed at such absurdity.

"An' what 'ud she du sure-ly with a gowd o' seelk and a hat all covered wi' a tosh o' ribbon? She'd be the laughing stock o' Tremellon, I tell 'ee—a pretty Antic!"

Rose did not argue the point. Mrs. Renowden might do what she liked with the dresses; she was conscious enough to be aware that in the future the touch of them would hurt her.

Mrs. Renowden waited for a reply, and receiving none, was affected once more by the sense of the strange dignity that had suddenly invested her. So once more she assented, but reserved the right to deal with the garments as she thought best, while Cherry, finding that a prize beyond all reason had

been snatched away from her, wiped her eyes furtively with the back of her hand.

Rose saw the movement and opened her purse. With a vague sense of disappointment, she found only her one and ninepence. It had grown more precious than an ordinary one and ninepence; she dared not give it away. She stooped and kissed the girl.

"Good-by, dear Cherry," she said; "I will send you a keepsake from London which will be much better than the dresses."

Then she lifted a white face to Mrs. Renowden, and in that action, curiously child-like, the old woman lost her sense of aloofness, and enfolded her in her arms as she might have enfolded one of her own children. And to Rose, although her heart within her was like a stone, the touch of the kind arms and motherly bosom brought a certain fleeting comfort.

"Puer burd," whispered the old woman close to her ear, "thee hast mar tu streeve with than 'ee lets on tu, I'll warrant. But keep a gude heart in 'ee, cheeld, fur 'ee can beleeve an old woman when she tells 'ee that there's naw tear made so wit that want soom day be dreed. An' that's the law o' God, my dear, an' his marcy endureth fur eever."

Rose did not look at Tremellon as she drove away. She sat still, hiding her face; she was afraid that the sight of it might wake her from her blessed sleep. It lay beneath her, flooded with memories, nestling under the cliffs in the broad sun, strong in light and strong in shadow. "That is Tremellon, and Tremellon, my dear Rose, is a place that you will remember until your dying day." The words came to her from another life as she sat dazed and upright in the carriage.

She paid Gannet for the chaise, and passed into the book-ing office. The man stared after her, and then withdrew his glance to wink at a porter.

"A docy madam," he said contemplatively; "but skeered sure-ly! She might be coom from a berrin."

In the train, dreams wound themselves round Rose more subtly and surely than before. She took a seat and hardly moved. People passed in and out of her carriage; some looked at her, others did not. Her mind was very still. Thoughts

passed her like painted shadows: they were unreal, they held neither joy nor sorrow. The only definite knowledge she possessed was that she was on the way—somewhere.

The day passed slowly. The other occupants of her carriage chattered gayly; they were pleased with themselves and with the world. At two o'clock they lunched off cold chicken and claret, and later they drank tea and ate buns. Rose had not thought of ordering food. She sat still looking always in front of her. Now and again they glanced at her curiously, and then turned away. She grew faint and her head ached. She swayed backwards and forwards with the movement of the train and the increasing speed deepened her stupefaction.

The afternoon turned to evening. The sun had set, magnificently blazoning his crimson pomp upon a background of dull purple. Rose looked out upon the darkness, and it seemed to her vaguely that many hours, dumb, blind, and senseless, must have passed her by.

At last the train whirled into a medley of noise and flickering lights. It stopped, and someone demanded her ticket. It jolted on again, and there was an expectant bustle in the carriage. She sat still.

Then sounds beat upon her weary brain; she had reached London, and a porter was speaking to her.

"Yes," she replied to his question; "a cab, please—10 Princes Street."

When the cab drew up she was nearly asleep, but somehow she felt rested; the fresh air had revived her.

It was quite dark; a lamp in front of the house, however, showed that Rosalie had recently done it up. The white paint gleamed in the light. Rose could see that there were green window boxes with yellow chrysanthemums in them. She opened her purse to pay the cabman, but found it empty; the remainder of her money had gone to porters.

"Wait a moment," she said, and rang the bell.

There was no answer, she rang twice—three times, and still there was no answer.

"I wonder if there is a good day girl now," thought Rose.

The forgotten past crept gradually upon her. In a few

days, a few hours even, her life with Templeton would have become the dream, her future with Rosalie the reality. She shuddered. She was more alert now; she realized that the worn-out London air was in her nostrils and the fresh winds and open skies of Tremellon were but a memory.

But the cabman waited. "'Urry up, miss, please," he said. "I cawn't stay 'ere all night."

Gathering up all her strength, Rose wrenched at the bell handle until the area shook.

Then the French window above was cautiously opened, and a woman's figure stepped out upon the balcony. It was Rosalie. She looked first at the cab and then she leant over the balustrade and looked at Rose.

"Whoever are you?" she said.

"I am Rose."

"Gracious!" exclaimed Rosalie; "I thought you were the fishmonger."

She came down and opened the door. She wore a white silk Empire tea gown with sleeves and girdle of silver tissue; long diamond earrings dangled from her ears, and a double string of the precious stones glittered at her throat. Her hair was dressed elaborately.

"I'm on the telephone now!" she said lightly, as though she had only that moment been parted from her daughter. She did not attempt to embrace Rose, or indeed to greet her in any way. The deep weariness depicted on her face and figure did not touch her. "There's a smelling beast of a fishmonger who rings me out of bed at night," she went on, "just because he wants his dirty money!"

Rose stared at her mother without speaking, until something in her expression annoyed Rosalie.

"You don't look all there!" she exclaimed. "What's the matter? I told you that I thought you were the fishmonger. He comes to the door in the evening, and tears down the bell if he thinks that I've got people and want to be quiet. Hound! Why on earth don't you come in?"

Rose showed her empty purse, and the sight of it kindled her mother's anger.

"You're a beauty!" she exclaimed. "How the devil can I pay the cab? I haven't got any change—I never have."

"Is anybody here?"

"Lord Berkhamstead. Two or three more are coming in later; we are going to play poker."

"Ask him."

"I don't believe I'd get an extra half-crown out of old B," said Rosalie, pursing her lips. "Pig! I often wonder why I don't turn him out. He eats more than he pays for."

However, she went back into the house, and returned with coin. Then she bethought herself.

"Hand down sixpence," she said to the cabman.

"Hain't got it," returned the man sulkily.

"Hand down a shilling then! It's an eighteenpenny fare from Paddington. Be quick, or I'll ring up the police."

"Gawd," exclaimed the man. "You'd scrape the skin off yer father's bones to make boots of, you would."

He handed her the coin, sulkily pocketed the half-crown, and drove off.

"There!" exclaimed Rosalie, smiling with satisfaction. "You may keep it, Rose! I haven't got a pocket in this gown. Now come in, for I want to tell you how I got on the telephone. It's a screaming joke."

It was not until Rosalie had exhausted all her news that she paused—leaning back in her armchair, her head supported by cushions, her suede slippers on the fender—to survey her daughter. She had not allowed Rose to go to bed, but had kept her forcibly in the drawing room. The girl's face and manner pleaded her intense fatigue, but Rosalie refused to listen.

"Go to bed!" she exclaimed. "What a notion!" That's so like you, Rose. There's no heart about you. No one would think that you hadn't seen your mother for weeks."

So Rose dropped speechless and trembling into an armchair. There was the usual spread of food in the inner room, and Rosalie recommended the lobster salad, but Rose had not the energy to go and help herself, and nobody offered to get

it for her. She sat quietly as she had sat all day, while Rosalie prattled on.

Lord Berkhamstead watched the pair with his little twinkling watery eyes. He expected to be amused. Rosalie had nothing to conceal from him; he knew her almost as well as she knew him, and despised her as completely as she despised him. Rosalie tolerated Berkhamstead because he was a lord, and brought a certain set of men to her house. Berkhamstead bore with Rosalie because it had become as fixed a habit with him to drop into 10 Princes Street in the evenings as to go to his club, as he did it in much the same spirit.

At last Rosalie stopped talking, and looked her daughter over from head to foot.

"You are ugly enough to-night!" she said contemplatively. "Your face is as dirty as a coal-heaver, and your eyes are all bunged up. Are you married?"

"No."

"Anything settled on you?"

"No."

"Where is Templeton?"

"I don't know."

"The old story! You are back again on my hands like a bad sixpence."

Lord Berkhamstead chuckled and rubbed his soft fat palms together.

"Good old character part!" he murmured. "Age don't wither you, my blessed Rosalie, custom don't stale you. What would the world be without you?"

"Well?" Rosalie questioned her daughter, paying no attention to her elderly visitor.

Rose did not reply. Her meekness kindled her mother's anger. She turned, exasperated, to Lord Berkhamstead.

"To think of that looney being my girl!" she exclaimed. "And the only one I ever had! It's a bitter disappointment, that's what it is! And to think of her opportunities! It's all very well, but opportunities don't come to everyone. I talk to you, B, because you're a friend, and more a father to her than her own father. Think of all the girls who are bound to

drudge for want of proper opportunities. They've got to be respectable; they don't get a chance of having a decent life. Some people talk as though a good-looking man with means was ready to pick up any girl he saw sitting in the hedge. A lot they know! There are too many sitting in the hedge. It needs a lot of work and cleverness and self control and character to get out of it, I can tell you. And when I think of the nonsense that dear old person upstairs talks sometimes, I'm fit to scream. He's got a secretary—a flat-chested girl with fishes' eyes. She writes his letters all wrong, but he goes on with her to 'keep her out of harm's way,' he says. He talks as though she might be sitting in a carriage covered with diamonds if it wasn't for him. A lot people like that know—a fat lot they know! Good Lord, it's the fools that come to grief, and only the fools. And I'm hanged if that blessed daughter of mine isn't going to grow up a fool! You'll have to turn religious, Rose, and go out as a governess, to keep you out of the workhouse; that's all you're fit for! You haven't enough brains to manage a man." Exhausted, Rosalie paused to draw breath.

"Let me go to bed, mother," said Rose, rising with difficulty to her feet. "I'm—I'm awfully ill!"

"No, you don't," said Rosalie petulantly; "you don't get over me like that. You haven't got any right to be ill! Where are your feelings, I'd like to know! Here you come asking me for bed and board and new dresses, and you don't lift a finger to get them. You're not worth your keep! Think of the chances I've given you!" she repeated, fiercely returning to the thought that had first roused her anger. "Think of the money I've laid out on you! And no returns! Absolutely no returns! Think of all the men who've been ready to take you off my hands—more than any girl ever had at your age—and you've failed with every blessed one of them, from want of brains. You kept that Templeton fellow longest of any, and now he's gone without a settlement—let alone marriage. If he'd given that time to me instead of you, he'd have married me at the end of it, old as I am! You're a simple idiot, and that's the truth. You are all angel and no devil. Men like

devil in a woman. I've told you that often enough. I've dinned it into you until I'm sick. Well, well, go your own way, but don't say that I haven't tried to bring you up to something better."

She was interrupted by Lord Berkhamstead's shrill laughter.

"He! He! You have! You have! You've done your best!" he cackled incoherently. "Not much angel about you—angel on horseback, with a good splash of cayenne, eh?"

As Rosalie had grown older her passions had grown fiercer, and her gusts of rage became with advancing years more frequent. Lord Berkhamstead declared that she thrashed her lovers when they were niggardly, and however that might be, since Rose had left her she had beaten a day girl over the head with a broomhandle, for which assault she had to pay heavy damages.

She was now caught in the full sweep and blare of her anger.

"Why don't you answer me?" she insisted, raising her voice to a scream. "You want me to feed you and clothe you, I suppose!"

Rose did not reply. She stood silent, swaying to and fro. The sight of her maddened Mrs. de Winton. She sprang up from the sofa, and advanced towards her daughter. Her breath came in the short gasps that Rose knew so well. When Rosalie was in a passion, Lord Berkhamstead declared that she snorted like a pig, and turned back her lips, showing her teeth.

Rose moved away from her. Her apathy was lifted by the sheer force of intense disgust. She was no longer afraid of her mother, but the sight of her had turned her sick with shame. Contact with a nature such as Monica Holden's had taught her the meaning of that word. Rosalie was so close that the girl felt her breath upon her cheek.

"Why don't your precious friends give you board and lodging?" she cried. "What right have you to come to me at your age? This isn't a home for imbeciles. I don't want to keep an idiot on my premises any more than they do!"

"You needn't," said Rose, gathering up her remaining strength. "This house is hell to me. I would rather die than remain here. I will go."

"Go!" shrieked Rosalie. "Go and die, and be damned."

She laid her hands upon the girl's shoulders, and pushed her through the door. Then she drew back as though to return to the room, but rage had conquered her. She gathered up her tea-gown in one hand, and followed Rose down the stairs, hustling her with the other, and pouring out a torrent of abuse. She pushed her through the front door, and banged it behind her. Then she walked upstairs slowly, for she was out of breath.

She found Lord Berkhamstead convulsed with laughter. He could not speak, but his eyes followed her about the room. Suddenly she caught sight of Rose's cloak and umbrella lying on the sofa. He wondered what she would do with them, for she was still possessed with fury.

She picked them up, and walked out on to the balcony. In the darkness, she could see Rose just below her, standing quite still. She flung the things out into the street. "They will be useful to you in the asylum," she shouted as a parting gibe.

Then she stepped back into the room and shut the window, for it was a cold night.

"I dropped a dog over the balcony that way once," she said meditatively, "a dachshund. It broke his back. I was sorry afterwards, for he was worth a lot, but he was a tiresome little beast—too affectionate, you know—he wouldn't leave one alone. I had a headache one day, and I simply couldn't stand it."

"You'd have dropped Rose over like the dachshund if you could have managed it!" said Lord Berkhamstead.

"Maybe."

Rosalie lit herself a cigarette and once more stretched out her delicately shod feet to the blaze. Then she gave a sigh of satisfaction, like a sleepy animal. "I'm glad I did that," she said; "very glad. It served her right. She'll be back in the morning."

Lord Berkhamstead did not answer; he appeared to be thinking.

"You are sure she'll be back?"

"Quite sure."

He lit a cigarette, and together they smoked in silence.

"Do you know, B," said Rosalie suddenly, "I don't really mind a good rage! In fact, I rather enjoy one. I feel better afterwards; it clears me out, somehow. I feel tired, of course," she added, "tired but contented."

"In the sort of state when a young child might play with you, eh?" said Lord Berkhamstead.

"That's it!" replied Rosalie, lighting another cigarette. "You've hit it."

Rose picked up the cloak and umbrella and walked on mechanically. It was a cold night. Soon she stood still and shivered, then she threw the cloak over her shoulders, and again walked on. She turned into Oxford Street, but the flashing lights and the noise oppressed her almost to pain. She thought of Tremellon, dreaming under the shadow of night, lapped about by the eternal sea. A strange nostalgia possessed her. She was sick not only for quiet, but for wind, sea, brown earth, and growing things. In those few weeks at Tremellon she had been like a creature who had found its home. Now she was turned adrift upon a strange world that went about its own business and did not even know of her existence; she thought of Cherry asleep in the attic with the late roses smiling in at the latticed window. She thought of her own bed unslept in—the bed with the white hangings where she had lain during her illness, looking out upon the movement of the sea. How far away it all was! She thought of the beginning of each quiet day—of Mrs. Renowden's breakfast-table—the honey, the white bread, and the new-laid eggs—then, she knew suddenly that she was faint and sick with hunger.

In the distance trees unnatural and metallic gleamed in the gaslight. She had reached the Bayswater Road. There, upon her left, was the Park; she could rest there. She turned in

at the Victoria Gate, and as she passed under the lamp-post, a woman standing at the corner looked after her with a sudden interest. She walked on for a few minutes towards the Serpentine, and then, tired out, sank down wearily upon a seat.

It was a clear, cold autumn night. Carriages rolled by with comfortable people in comfortable evening wraps inside them. A solitary servant girl and her lover, their arms wrapped round each other, passed by slowly walking in step. Rose watched them until they were out of sight, then she shivered again, and grew her cloak more closely round her. It occurred to her for the first time that she had nowhere to go to, and no money. She opened her purse, there was nothing in it but the sixpence that Rosalie had given her. The meaning of that reached her fogged brain slowly. She was alone with nothing in the world. She had reached the inexorable edge of life. There was nothing now to mitigate hunger and cold, pain and death. She was alone.

She did not feel any great anguish, for she still lived beyond the power of pain. But she wondered vaguely what would happen next. A tramp passed her, a woman with a blotched, distorted face, carrying a baby. She was like her, Rose thought. She also lived upon the edge of life. Rose looked at her with interest, leaning forward to get a better view. As she drew back, and fell once more into listlessness, she became aware that someone else occupied the further end of the seat. It was the woman who had watched her as she passed under the lamp-post, but she did not look at Rose, her head was turned in the other direction. Rose noticed a certain grace about her, and wondered what she was doing in the park at such a time. It never struck her that the woman might have been wondering the same thing about her. Then sensation stirred in her, and she forgot the woman. She forgot also, to regret the past or to make plans for the future. She only knew that she was cold, hungry, and friendless—very cold and very hungry. In the Bayswater Road, she thought there were great houses with comfortable bedrooms in them, where one could sleep and sleep and sleep—homes full

of people who had other people to care if they lived or died. Nobody in this wide world cared if Rose lived or died. It was a strange thought. She was quite alone.

Soon she found that the tears were trickling down her cheeks. She did not know why she cried. She was not suffering acutely, but the world is a big place, and when one has reached the edge of it, realities are very near and very alarming. Eternity was all around her, and eternity frightened Rose. But she did not cry from fear. She did not reason about it. Her heart, it seemed, was dead within her, and something that was not herself shed tears and whimpered. She wished it would not. She wished she could be quiet. She felt very ill. She thought obscurely that perhaps a hospital might take her in, and let her sleep somewhere.

It was getting very cold, soon she would be obliged to move on.

She wiped her eyes, and tried to still her sobs, but she found it impossible to control them. The woman at the other end of the seat came nearer. She had not after the first glance appeared to notice Rose at all, but now she came up to her, and laid a hand upon her arm.

"You are very unhappy,"

"Yes—at least, I don't know—I think I am."

"It is so cold here, why don't you go home?"

"I have nowhere to go to."

"Have you no friends?"

"No."

"Then you must find a lodging."

"I have no money—only sixpence."

Surprise grew in the woman's eyes. Her mind was at work. She did not take her hand from Rose's arm. She held her, reading her with difficulty.

"You are a lady. It is very strange that you have no friends."

"No," said Rose wearily, "I am not a lady. If I were a lady, I should have friends. I am only just a girl."

"Then you will not be angry with me, if I ask you something."

"What do you want to ask me?"

"To come home with me—for to-night at least."

Rose looked at her in surprise. It was an extraordinary invitation, coming as it did from a perfect stranger. It might be a trap! It probably was. However, a girl with only sixpence between herself and eternity is quite ready to be trapped if need be. Rose did not greatly care.

"Who are you?" she asked. The words slipped from her almost before she knew that she had spoken them. Then she added—with a sudden impulse, for the woman's voice recalled Monica Holden—"You are a lady. What can you want with me?"

It was not a trap; her instinct told her that much, but what else then would it be?

The elder woman smiled at her mystification.

"You implied just now that a lady is a woman with friends. If that is so, I am a great lady, for I have a great many friends. Will you come?"

"I'll go anywhere where I can go to sleep," said Rose.

"Some of my friends are rather rough girls; you won't mind that?"

"I shan't mind anything if I am asleep." Then with a rush, all Rose's suspicions were once more upon her. Her apathy lifted. "What are *you* doing here?" she said bluntly, with a sudden recrudescence of strength. "Who are your friends? Why do you walk about the Park at night? Why did you speak to me? What do you want me for? I don't much care, but I should like to know."

"I am here because I came out to find you," replied the woman. "My house is a house where girls who are friendless may shelter if they want to. All those girls are my friends. Sometimes they don't want to and then I don't speak to them. But if I think they do, I ask them to come back with me. I did not speak to you until I saw you cry."

"But why do you do it?"

"Because—oh! it's dreadful to have no friends. At least— isn't it dreadful?"

"I don't know," replied Rose. "I am very sleepy."

"Then it's time to go home," returned the woman.

She slipped her hand inside Rose's arm, and the two walked slowly out of the Park. At the gate they passed a policeman who was evidently known to her.

"Good-night, Miss Warriner," he called out cheerfully. "A cold night this for folks whose work brings them outdoors."

"Good-night," said the woman. "I'm going home now. I shan't be back again."

Chapter Twenty-One

"How much, preventing God! how much I owe
To the defenses thou hast round me set:
Example, custom, fear, occasion slow—
These scorned bondmen were my parapet.
I dare not gauge the roaring gulf below
The depths of sin to which I had descended,
Had not these me against myself defended."

EMERSON

ST. FAITH'S REFUGE for homeless girls was situated in one of the side streets jutting out from the Edge-ware Road. It was a small house, one of a row, and differed only from its neighbors by its brass plate, its lack of lace curtains, and its air of extreme reserve. It was a house of silence—a house with blind eyes and deaf ears, and yet withal exceedingly alert and wide awake, so that its doors were never closed by day or by night.

The home was managed by a committee of ladies, a matron, and one Miss Warriner, a gentlewoman, who gave up her income and all her time to the task of finding her inmates and of establishing them in some decent walk of life when found. Mary Warriner had, after three years at Newnham, and three more years spent in London and the country under the chaperonage of Lady Warriner, an old, good-looking, wise, and spiteful aunt, finally decided in defiance of friends, disgusted and surprised, to cast away both talent and beauty in the life that she had chosen for herself. Her choice had been made suddenly. One night when walking home from a neighbor's house she had come upon a milliner's apprentice, a pitiful child of fifteen, who through some mischance had lost her situation. From her Mary learnt of a state of things that made her life a burden to her and its pleasures a disgrace. "The cruellest man alive could not sit at his feast unless he sat blindfolded." Mary Warriner tore the bandage from her eyes and went down into the streets.

This afternoon the small front room at St. Faith's had been set in readiness for a committee meeting. Six chairs were placed round the table which held ink, pens, and blotting paper. The committee began to arrive. After some fluttering it settled itself round the table. The books were gone through and matters of housekeeping and finance discussed. At the end of an hour the week's work was reported on. There were seven cases in the house, five new ones and the two feeble-minded cases that had disturbed Miss Preston, giving point to her most vivid argument.

Mary Warriner read her report slowly, pausing now and again to answer questions or explain certain points arising out of each case.

The report came to an end. There was a silence as Miss Warriner folded up her paper.

"Would you mind going back to Case 6, Rose de Winton?" put in Mrs. Gray. "You said she was a better-class girl. What sort of class—a governess?"

"No, she has not been leading a respectable life—she told me that much," replied Miss Warriner; "but she is refined and totally unaccustomed to work of any sort."

"Hum," said Maud Preston dubiously, "a bad lookout for Rose de Winton. What do you intend doing with her?"

"Does she refuse to go into a penitentiary?" put in another member of the committee.

"No. She is ready to do anything that I tell her. Her spirit is completely broken. I should have liked to have sent her to Mrs. Willoughby's Home for a time, until I could find some sort of post for her."

"Mrs. Willoughby's Home for Penitents of the Upper Classes. But that costs a guinea a week."

"I know; that is the difficulty."

"How long would she stay there?"

"I can't tell. I can't imagine what she can do. She might serve in a shop, or do embroidery. Mrs. Willoughby would know."

"There is no use in considering Mrs. Willoughby's Home, Miss Warriner," said Mrs. Gray decidedly. "It is perfectly

impossible for us to raise a guinea a week. We are already paying a weekly five shillings for two girls in maternity homes, and the Treasurer has just told us that there is only about fifteen pounds left in the bank. Besides, this isn't a Refuge for better class girls."

"Why not?" Another speaker raised her voice. "If she is really sorry for her fault, she can prove it in a penitentiary. And surely, if there is one willing to receive her, she had better go there."

The lines in Miss Warriner's face appeared suddenly more marked than before; her brows were now set in a network of minute wrinkles. It was clear to the committee that the thought of a penitentiary in connection with Case No. 6 was especially distasteful to her.

"She is so ignorant," she pleaded; "she would have no idea what it meant. I don't think she is exactly sorry for her fault—she doesn't understand that it is a fault—but she is bitterly unhappy. She is grateful to me, and has promised to do anything I tell her. She would go into a penitentiary at once, without the shadow of an idea as to what she was going to. I shouldn't like her to feel—trapped. Some of the penitentiaries are very hard."

Mrs. Gray pounced upon her last sentence. "They are meant to be hard," she said in a clear musical voice; during Miss Warriner's speech, her disapprobation had grown visibly. "We don't expect them to be pleasant places. They are the reward of sin. A humble and a contrite heart is the thing aimed at. I really don't see how we can keep this girl at our expense if a penitentiary is ready to receive her. How can we? It is absurd."

Miss Warriner did not reply; she sat looking before her with troubled eyes. The desire was unreasonable, but she would like to have kept Rose de Winton.

Chapter Twenty-Two

"You promise heavens free from strife,
Pure faith and perfect change of will,
But sweet, ah sweet, is human life,
So sweet I fain would breathe it still,
Your chilly stars I can forego,
This kind warm earth is all I know."

Ionica.

IT was not until some months had passed by that Rose shook off the apathy that had fallen on her, and when that time came, and the dumb, blind soul within her quickened into new life, her sense of pain revived. Christmas had come and gone. Sprigs of holly had for a time enlivened the walls of the penitentiary; some ladies had sent a gift of oranges and nuts to the penitents, and on Christmas day they had partaken of boiled beef and plum pudding. Then life had resumed its sterile monotony, but to Rose the habitual daily task, the common round that she had learnt to know so well came as a different thing. It no longer brought her peace. She lay awake at nights and her tears soaked into her pillow. Sometimes they trickled about her face while she lay rigid with the coarse sheet stuffed into her mouth to strangle her sobs. During prayers they fell upon her moving lips or through her clasped hands on to her office book.

During these last months Rose de Winton had achieved the difficult accomplishment of prayer. It was no longer a form to her, but a living thing, now almost the only reality in her life. Bereft of all human consolation, she had turned in the direction the Sisters pointed and in her extremity had besieged heaven. At first such prayer had been a mere hysterical outlet for her grief; but later it became a comfort, and increased in power until it had attained its present mastery over her will and thoughts. But side by side with this new hope grew up also the old consciousness of pain. Healed by prayer on

the one hand, she was on the other hand racked by pain that struck deep roots and fibers into her being, until at last the day came when that over-ruling energy that we term Chance gave to it a strength most terrible. Early in March a new penitent came to the Home, and as she was ushered in to the workroom, Rose, looking up, met the eyes of Mary Gannet of Tremellon. The recognition was mutual. A glance flashed between the two and then dropped. But from under her down-cast eyes Rose watched the girl greedily, absorbing in a sense her personality. In every tone of Mary Gannet's voice, in her accent and the arrangement of her phrases, even in her walk and the movement of her shoulder, Rose once more discovered Tremellon, felt once more the wind in her face and the salt lash of the sea upon her lips.

"Ess fay, I du belong tu be," replied Mary Gannet on that first afternoon in the workroom in answer to some question of Sister's Caroline's. Rose had shuddered at the well-remembered idiom, and her work had dropped from her hands. She picked it up quickly, and bent over it to hide her flushed cheeks, but, as she stitched doggedly, thoughts and impulses that she had imagined were long dead crowded upon her.

The arrival of Mary Gannet brought with it a rush of outside air that was to Rose as a breath of painful life breathed into a dead body. She stirred in her sleep, and the ghosts of dead desires took form ready to wake her. She had heard much of temptation since she had become an inmate of the Magdalene Home, but she did not look upon these things as a danger. The temptation from which even the most respectable of us prays to be delivered is in all things blindness of heart. The sordid thing comes to us trailing the garments of illusion. The struggle of temptation is always a struggle against what appears to us as an overwhelming good, or it isn't worth the name. It is not a mere pleasure that we want, it is a quickened sense of life, and in rejecting that, it seems we reject the most desirable thing that existence has to offer. In fact we do not reject it unless we are brought to realize something more desirable.

So of late circumstances had shut Rose's mind to one set of ideas and had opened it to another. Since her arrival at the Magdalene Home the thing that had become for her the most desirable was peace—peace that could only be attained by the clean and consummate purity of body and of mind—unclouded vision, singleness of purpose. Power she wanted, but power over herself, and this she was told could only be reached by the sacrifice of self. This was the ideal towards which she had begun to struggle daily, and it was in that fight with herself that of necessity ensued, that her pain had revived. But three times a day, and day after day, she knelt at her prayers and rose better able to sustain the difficult battle. Prayer had become for her a strong tower and rock of defense against the enemy. She lived an inner life, dead to material things, the routine of her days, the sewing, cleaning, and washing, the very eating and drinking, but struggling always with her pain, fighting it with the weapon of prayer, strong in the immense force of example and opinion, and above all held with her fellows by that invisible barrier that shut them away from the outside world.

She was not unhappy, for an unused part of her nature had been set free. Rose de Winton had within her an instinct for holiness as great as that of even Elizabeth Templeton—she had some of the stuff within her of which Ruth Templeton, open-hearted and fearless as she was, knew nothing, and compared to which the tart virtue of the Sister Superior of the Magdalene Home was a thing barren and spiritually undeveloped. The instinct was there, pent up within her, until one day her heart had broken to let it free.

Then Fate, sardonic, or it maybe weeping, but inexorable always, sent Mary Gannet to press the newborn impulse back into obscurity, to call the dead past to life, as it were, with the sound of a trumpet. Every untrained longing in Rose de Winton responded to the call. Old habit, blind desire for happiness, health of body which implied impatience under restraint, were quick to answer. To the material eye all that might be discerned now was a young girl perpetually

day-dreaming; but to the inner vision a conflict was in progress, a conflict that could end but in one way.

"The terrible kings are upon me,
With spears that are deadly and bright,
Against me so from the cradle,
Do Fate and my fathers fight."

An army had come out with flags and banners to capture one weak wingless angel strayed from heaven.

That night Rose de Winton found that she could not pray. Her mind rocked with longing for the past; the faces of old friends rose before her—Monica Holden, Mrs. Renowden, Cherry. Another face was there, but that she did not dare picture; an instinct for self-preservation held it from her, for in the thought of that face lay mental anguish verging upon insanity. Her lethargy had dropped from her, she was transported into another world. Her cheeks flushed, and her eyes glittered. As the girls filed past her into the dormitory, Sister Caroline noticed the change, and wondered what had come to Rose de Winton, usually so gentle and so placid.

Fate, however, was still busy in her concerns, for in the dormitory Mary Gannet occupied the bed at her side. It was natural that it should be so. During her residence in the Home Rose's record had been unimpeachable, and the matron desired her influence for a new penitent.

But the circumstance did not tend to allay the turmoil of Rose's mind. The girls undressed side by side without even glancing at once another. It was not necessary, for each knew the other's secret. Mary Gannet was comforted, but every moment that passed left Rose more restless. She lay down in her straight, hard bed, scarcely daring to draw a breath. Her cheeks burned like fire. At her heart life was stirring wildly, for she had made a great discovery. The blood could still leap in her veins, she could still laugh and sing and love. She was a human creature after all, and, lovely outcast as she was, she demanded her birthright. She lay motionless with hands pressed upon her bosom, tingling with the new and glorious knowledge.

There were no sounds in the dormitory but the sounds of

sleep. The slide was pushed back and Sister Caroline slept also, slept and dreamt; Rose could hear her heavy regular breathing.

Suddenly a scarcely audible whisper floated to her from the bed at her side.

"Mrs. Gray."

Her throat tightened and tears sprang to her eyes at the unaccustomed name.

"Yes, Mary." For a moment she also choked.

"I'm reet glad tu see 'ee," said the girl, "boot I'm sorrowed tu. How did 'ee come here sure-ly?"

"I had nowhere else to go to, Mary."

"Nor I," returned the other. "My father turned me away. I couldn't faice the foak down home, so here I be—about done, I'm theenking."

"Hush, what's that?"

A girl turned in her sleep with a few broken words. After that the rhythm of deep-drawn breathing added to the silence. Sleep hung in the air—sleep and obscurity. The room was gray rather than black, and the faint light coming from the barred curtainless windows added to it a misty unreality.

"This be a tarreeble place," said Mary Gannet after a moment. "I can du nought but weep."

Rose steadied herself to say something that might comfort her old acquaintance, but even as she spoke, the words sounded dead—there was no meaning in them even to her.

"It's not terrible, Mary. You will be happy here in time. All the girls are miserable at first, but they get happy—quite happy afterwards; they do, indeed."

Her hot cheeks and the beating of her heart belied her words. But Mary Gannet did not know that; it was her secret. Outside those bars there was the world, the great, glorious radiant world whose voice had come to her, at first in the merest whisper, through the newcomer lying weeping in the bed beside her. Her blood had responded to the call, and for the moment all her pain was forgotten in the thought of freedom. Freedom! Outside those bars there was freedom—life, laughter, love. In spite of Templeton, in spite of the

gray hard days in the penitentiary, she might snatch a little laughter yet, a little laughter, a little love before death claimed her. "There's no tear made so wet that it can't some day be dried." Those were Mrs. Renowden's words; they came to her now with a new meaning.

A smothered sob brought her back to the sleeping dormitory. Mary Gannet could hold out no longer. The sense of her misfortune had overpowered her and she resigned herself completely to it, giving way to a frenzy of tears. It was her first night at the penitentiary. She was passing through that hour of deep dejection with which every inmate there was well acquainted. At last a girl moved and sat up in bed, rubbing her eyes, then another and another. A rustling of black skirts brought Sister Caroline into the ward. She was fully dressed and, as usual, calm and unhurried. With the help of the Matron and a penitent, she got Mary Gannet moved into a solitary room at the far end of the house, kept ready for such emergencies. The room was named "Obedience." At the Magdalene Home every dormitory had over its door a motto. The dormitory that Mary Gannet had just quitted was named "Joy," the two others in the same corridor "Peace" and "Charity." In "Obedience" girls were allowed to come, as Sister Superior described it, "to their senses."

At this moment in "Joy" the departure of the Sister and Matron left a brief moment for conversation, but most of the girls were too sleepy to avail themselves of it.

"It does yer up shocking to cry like that," said one girl.

"She don't feel it," replied another, "an' if she hits 'erself agin the wall she won't feel that neither. Yer don't, yer know, till afterwards, when yer finds yer bruised," she added philosophically, patting her pillow into a comfortable shape.

Even Rose was not greatly disturbed at the occurrence. She had seen such grief as Mary's too often during these last months for it to make much impression upon her. It had to be gone through; there was nothing else to be done. But the thing had turned her thoughts, and she no longer felt the rush of the new life within her. Pain—another's pain this time, and not her own, had once more been forced upon her.

She was very tired; she did not want to think; she lay down, and in a few minutes was sound asleep.

But although Mary Gannet had been taken away from the dormitory, her presence and all it stood for remained with Rose during the night and was there at her bedside when she opened her eyes in the morning. Freedom! Beyond those bars there was freedom! When the girls met at the silent breakfast table the next morning, Mary white and heavy-eyed after a night of turbulent but unavailing weeping, Rose could think of nothing but the fact that she had just come from the outside world where there was freedom.

Mary Gannet made a bad penitent. She remained in the condition of the caged wild animal for an exceptionally long time, and she could not be made to realize that by insubordination she hurt no one but herself. Therefore she spent the two following days in solitary confinement in the little oratory. At the end of the second day the Sister Superior visited her and remained talking to her for about half an hour. She was present at tea that night and contrite. For some time at least the trouble was at an end.

Rose smiled to herself as she saw her, for she knew that it would be so. This happened always. Had she been asked on the same night that she first recognized Mary Gannet in the dress of a penitent, she could have foretold it in detail. Her behavior was no new thing. Almost every girl in the house except herself had at one time or another passed through such a crisis; it was inevitable. And Rose had no thoughts now to spare for Mary Gannet, for her heart beat only to one tune—"Freedom! Freedom! Beyond the bars there was freedom."

At the Magdalene Home the refectory window looked out upon a bit of wild garden. At mealtime Rose could see the sky through the bare branches; she had the growth and shape of them by heart. One day at dinner she watched in the open space above the trees a flight of rooks breaking the serenity of the colorless sky with inky speckles. How fast they were moving. They were free. Nobody knew where they were coming from, or where they were going to. Happy glorious

rooks! Nearer, almost touching the window pane, a robin cocked his head on one side and looked at Rose with bright beady eyes. He was free also, only the penitents were prisoners. "A penitent robin!" thought Rose. "How absurd!" The idea amused her: hardly knowing what she did she threw back her head and laughed softly. The sound was an unusual one. Sister Caroline, who had watched Rose now for some days, was quick to observe it, and the change that was gradually taking place.

"Rose, did I hear you laughing?"

"Yes, Sister."

"Stand up and put your hands on your shoulders."

Rose obeyed, but her position did not alter her view; from where she stood she could still see the wild garden. The rooks had passed, but the robin remained and turned his head and his bright eyes from side to side. Rose stood still with her hands on her shoulders, and the attitude of humiliation stiffened a heart that had in the last few days turned completely away from the ideals of the penitentiary. She was obsessed by the longing to be free. Until that longing was appeased, she had no faculty for absorbing any other idea. By the time she was told to take her hands from her shoulders she had irrevocably made up her mind. She was ready to die to gain her freedom, ready to risk her all on a single stake.

That night she slept quietly, and Mary Gannet at her side slept quietly also, with the air of a little child who has cried its naughtiness away.

Rose had not long to wait for her opportunity. On the following day the Matron sent her from the workroom to the Community room with some aprons that had just been completed. No other penitent could have been allowed that liberty, for it was a rule that no girl should be left even for one moment to herself. But Rose was different from the others, and instinctively the Matron had begun to rely upon her and to look to her for support in little things. Sister Caroline had gone with the other Sisters into the chapel for the office of Sext, and Rose had instructions to wait until she came out

to deliver the things, and then to return immediately to the workroom. There was nobody about. The Sisters were safely in the chapel. Some of the penitents were in the laundry with the laundry matron, others hard at needlework. The Community room looked out upon the garden, and the garden gate was, in the middle of the day, as Rose knew well, left unlocked. She wasted no time now in dreams; her mind was already made up and she did not hesitate for a moment. She laid the aprons on the table, and picking up her print skirts clambered through the window, brushing aside and trampling down the clumps of daffodils that were just showing. She tore herself through the hedge of evergreens and newly budding shoots, passed down the avenue and out at the gate. Then she stopped for an instant and drew a long breath to steady herself. She never looked back. Soon she was on the moor. She followed the road, which was heavy owing to recent rains, running swiftly and determinedly impelled to fly from what had become to her, now that her heart was blinded to its meaning, as the very grave. On and on she ran quicker and quicker. She passed great masses of low-lying brambles, an oak tree with mistletoe growing upon it in an untidy bundle, but she saw nothing. It was not until she reached the bottom of the hill that she paused to look about her. She was in a lane that passed by a Manor House and under the shadow of an old church, and became eventually the one street of Brentwold. At the far end an Inn hung out its sign. Rose, even at her last extremity, was shy of throwing herself upon the mercy of a public house, although to Julia such a thing would have been natural enough. She turned instead to the first shop she came to, a small baker's half cottage and half store, and sank down exhausted upon a stool. In an inner room opening upon the shop, a woman and a little child sat at a meal. Rose's appearance startled the woman. She had risen up to serve her, but now the strangely cut print dress and the white cap caught her attention. Curiosity conquered her native reserve.

"Be yo from these parts?" she demanded curiously.

"I'm from the Home. I—I have run away," replied Rose

simply. She faced the truth. It would admit of no disguise.

The woman stared more than ever; her dull wits did not seem to have grasped the information. "Fra t' Home!" she repeated.

"Yes, the Home—the Magdalene Home at the top of the hill."

"Ah," said the woman, light breaking upon her stolidity. "I know. Wheer t' nuns live. So you've runned away! Eh, boot I'd 'a' been afeared to do that! Wasn't they good to yer? Dean't ye git enough t' eat?"

"It wasn't that," replied Rose. "I couldn't bear it; that was all. I ran away. Look here," she sprang to her feet, and came nearer to the woman. "If you will give me money for my ticket to London I'll send back what you give me doubled the moment I get home. Did you hear?" she repeated, emphatically, as the woman made no answer. "You shall have back whatever sum you give me and as much again within a few days. Will you do it? Will you lend it to me?"

But the woman was a North country woman and cautious.

"I doan't know as I can do that," she said slowly.

"Why not?"

"Well, where would ye goa fur to git all t' monny to pay me back with, I'd like to know."

"I'd go to my mother," replied Rose. Julia's words prompted her reply, but she knew well that Rosalie's was the last house in which she would set foot.

"Yo mother!" exclaimed the woman in astonishment. "You've got a——"

She was interrupted by a man who came in through the back kitchen with a tray of bread in his hands.

"William," said the woman, "yon's a girl," she scanned Rose for a minute; "a young lady who've been trapped int' that convent place on top o' t' hill. She've rooned awa'. She wants to get home to her mother. She's nobbut a young 'un an' she've not bin treated well."

The man laid the tray upon the table and, leaning over it, stared at Rose from the top of her bright head with its masses

of hair concealed under the white cap to the clumsy shoes and the thick lumpy stockings showing beneath her short skirt.

"How did they ketch 'old o' 'ee?" said the man. "They'd do onnything oop theer to lay hands on a single soul."

"I went to them of my own free will, but, but—I must get away now. I cannot stay to tell you. Will you lend me the money to get back to London with? I swear I will repay it! I swear it."

"An' how will 'ee repay it?"

"My mother will give it to me."

"Yo mother! An' what was yo mother aboot t' let 'ee get into sich a place? I'd as lief have a darter o' mine in t' work-house, I would, as shut oop with t' nuns, learning about the Vargin Mary an' the Pope o' Rome an sich like blasphemies,"

As he spoke, the handle turned in the door to admit a customer, and the woman, in response to the agonized appeal in Rose's eyes, hustled her into the little back kitchen. The child still sat at his meal. He stared at Rose with his great blue eyes, and sucked the remainder of a crust, but the girl was too frightened and shaken to notice anything. There was no need, however, for such alarm, for the customer turned out to be a relation who was soon put in possession of the strange story. The baker was amused at the women's consternation.

"See them flurry like a couple of hens when yo looked in," he said, chuckling. "Yo would theenk it had been the Devil himself come down from the convent to fetch back t' lass."

But in spite of his levity, there was growing up in the baker's mind a strong sense of responsibility towards Rose. He was a slow man, and it always took him a long time to absorb an idea, but that process once accomplished, there was no room left in his head for any other consideration. The idea reigned alone. He was one of the elders of his chapel, and a man of some consequence in the village. Whatever he did or left undone was the result of much thought and much conversation. He did not pause now before discussing this story with his neighbors. He had it ready for each newcomer as they dropped into the shop, so that at the end of three-

quarters of an hour, there were no less than fifteen persons who knew, under the pledge of secrecy, that a girl had run away from Brentwold Penitentiary. But the feeling in the village was for Rose and against the Community of the Holy Cross. Her story, however, disappointed them, for she made no complaints. She had not been starved or beaten, and indeed there seemed to be little reason for her flight. But as she declined to give details the villagers supplied them for her. What imagination would refrain from creating a reason for such an escapade? Romance triumphed, and to such good effect that, in the name of Justice and Protestantism, they collected enough money to pay for Rose's ticket to London. One woman lent her a hat, another a shawl, and a third a skirt, until fully equipped the girl made her way, accompanied by many friends, to the railway station.

"A lady born," said one woman. "Look at her pretty head and her white hands. We haven't heard the end o' this day's work!"

The baker was full of excitement that was to him as strong wine. His tongue was loosened and many of the phrases current among those of his particular denomination dropped from his mouth.

"Friends," he said huskily, "we done a good deed this day; we've snatched a brand from the burning and the gnashing of teeth. We've given one o' the little ones drink, and have delivered her from the oppression and have in such wise averted the millstone and the wrath to come."

"Ay," said a man—the keeper of the public house at the corner. "We little know all that goes on at such places a' t' owd home up on t' hill!"

"No, Mr. Bamstead, we do not, and that's true fur 'ee," replied a woman. "We know but little. I'm told that they pray three times a day up there for vainglory, and they fast just as often, like the Pharisees!"

"Did yo ever hear tell o' t' like!" put in another. "I doan't blame the lass. I doan't blame her, she've rooned away belike from vain words and the devices of the devil."

"She've runned away from t' Pope, which is Anti-Christ,

and t' Beast and six hundred and sixty-six," said the baker, "an' that means t' Scarlet Woman and t' vials of wrath. Therefore, friends, we've done a good day's work this hour. Ye'll write to us, lass, when 'ee gets to Lunnun."

Rose promised she would write. She did not know the meaning of their words, but she stood on the steps of the railway carriage pressing their hands and thanking them with tears in her eyes.

A Yorkshire crowd is a hard crowd; the sentiment that Mrs. Renowden dealt in so lavishly was absent, but more than one woman had tears in her eyes as she looked at the fair, pathetic face that bore upon it such evident marks of suffering.

At last the whistle sounded. Rose sank back in her carriage as the train moved slowly from the station. The thing was done. The wild creature was free, free with the freedom of a penniless, friendless girl in a great city. Hitherto Rose's mind had been entirely occupied with her escape, now for the first time she speculated concerning the future. The inevitable reaction set in. She covered her eyes with her hands, terrified at what she had done.

"What will come next!" she said under her breath. "Oh, God, what will come next!"

Chapter Twenty-Three

In spacious conditions life manifests itself in passions, in narrow ones in prejudices. —W. J. LOCKE.

DURING the months that followed Lady Templeton's death a subtle change took place in Ruth: she passed from girlhood to womanhood. February marked not only the third month of her loneliness,—for all her computations dated from her loss,—but it marked also her twentieth birthday. It was at that age that Elizabeth, a young wife, had first come to live at Templeton. Ruth was very much what her mother had been in those days, but of a stronger build and stronger in her coloring; her eyes were brown instead of blue and her hair was darker. Her outlook on life was what Elizabeth's outlook had been, and yet, in a sense, it was a wider one. Elizabeth, brought up by a mother who might have stood as the type of the revolutionary woman of her generation, had been taught much of human imperfection, but had experienced little. The teaching had dropped from her. She had that in her which rendered her blind and deaf to the ugliness and coarseness of the world. She had refused to see its hypocrisies. When they were forced home to her so that they pierced her to the heart, she shuddered and wept, retiring more and more into the depths of her own soul, where dwelt the vision of ideal beauty that alone enabled her to live. Even then she did not face the thing that had wounded her. She suffered, and she attributed her suffering to her own weakness. She had not loved enough, she argued to herself; she had not understood sufficiently. Her forgiveness of the sinner was so absolute that she had held back no atom of her love. Sir Raymond never guessed that she had discovered his secret, neither did he guess that she had long before that fathomed his character, knowing him in fact infinitely better than he knew himself. And so her attitude towards her

trouble helped to heal it, for hers was a nature in which, humanly speaking, self had been eliminated.

"An angel in chiffon," Mrs. Whitter had termed her contemptuously. She could never have applied that epithet to Ruth. Ruth, brought up to know nothing of the hidden workings of the world, had, first through her intuition, and then through the experience of the last six months, learnt much. Life is a great leveler, it implants in each one of us that which counteracts the effects of early training, instructs ignorance, stultifies wisdom, and distributes broadly joys and sorrows which arise from no outward circumstances. We cannot get away from life; we are instructed in it and by it, willingly or against our will.

So Ruth at twenty was a sensible clear-eyed young woman, a little grave, a little reserved, a little—and in this her youth was evident—scornful. But such an attitude was difficult to avoid, living as she did now with Mrs. Whitter and her father as her sole companions. It would have needed a profounder knowledge of human nature than she possessed, or else a saintliness to which she might never attain, to walk humbly under such conditions.

"Help me to need no help from men,
That I may help all men that need."

That was the substance of Ruth's prayers, as she lived now in her pride and in her loneliness, disdaining the sympathy of those fellow creatures whom, without acknowledging it even to herself, she despised. There was a bitter pride in that prayer as she prayed it, a bitter assertion of self that love might in the future overcome, or pain destroy. In her ignorance Ruth thought that she had done with love. She pictured her life stretching away into the future of old age, a life of noble purpose, nobly (here she had the grace to hesitate) fulfilled. And in that life, husband and child had no part; a jealous adoration of her mother's memory seemed to have supplanted the craving for natural love which Templeton had so grossly exploited. But Templeton was forgotten now; since that autumn day when Elizabeth had drifted beyond the reach of

human skill and human sympathy, Ruth felt that she belonged absolutely to her mother and her mother to her. The daughter's life, she determined, should be lived in accordance with the mother's ideal and the daughter's heart kept empty of any love that might deny to the mother the sovereign place. Lady Templeton should receive in death that adoration, that singleness of service which in life had been denied her.

It was in such a mood and from such a standpoint that the girl now viewed her father. His first grief had spent itself in tears and phrases, and now Elizabeth, her beauty, her virtue, and above all, her wifely worship of himself, had become for Sir Raymond the most agreeable object of contemplation; now that she was dead, the Baronet felt, like Ruth, that he possessed her utterly; but without any disturbing suspicion of wifely criticism. He no longer felt any compunction in his thoughts of her, only a delicious consciousness that in choosing a wife fit to receive his love, he had laid his hand upon a unique woman. Sir Raymond fed upon his reminiscences and made his grief his most enduring pleasure. Standing before a portrait, Sir Raymond had been heard to observe that Lady Templeton had just such an exquisite ear. After the remark emotion mastered him, and with a deep sigh he had turned away. Confronted by any striking example of married happiness, Sir Raymond would smile down upon it condescendingly, as one who would say that there were no sweet intimate secrets between husband and wife for which his own experience did not afford a richer parallel. He had tasted the intoxication brought to him by the supreme surrender of a perfect creature—a creature worthy of the highest gift Heaven had to offer to a woman—a good man's love. So Sir Raymond put it to himself with the constant conviction that for such a gift Elizabeth had thanked Heaven daily. Of what she lacked, what she prayed for,—those passionate prayers for courage and for patience,—he did not inquire.

He talked of these things to Mrs. Whitter, who had the faculty of listening intelligently, and she answered his mood at such times by sympathetic silence. Ruth watched the couple—the sorrowing widower and his gentle friend, and her scorn

grew; invariably she turned away with compressed lips. But as Miss Templeton's reserve increased, and she retired more and more into herself, so Mrs. Whitter's hold on the Baronet tightened, until even within three months of Elizabeth's death nothing could be done at Templeton but at her desire or with her concurrence. But Ruth was blind to the march of life within the walls of her home; she did not realize in the least whither it was leading.

And it was into such a state of things that Robert Trelling one day returned. But he, with that curious blindness to the problems nearest to him, and absorbed only by the abnormal psychology which was his professional study, paid no attention to them. The only person who was at all alive to actualities was Pansy herself, and at the end of each day, like an experienced player, and one who worked upon a system, she balanced her gains and her losses and considered the possibilities of the morrow.

Ruth was glad to see Robert Trelling, more glad than she cared to allow; and seeking relief from her own thoughts, she flung herself enthusiastically into all his schemes. He intended opening a hospital in Paris where cures would be effected to some extent by the ordinary methods of medicine and surgery, but primarily through the agency of that mental factor which in his opinion had never been developed or understood.

Ruth, somewhat to his astonishment, listened with eagerness to all he had to tell her. She studied psychology, questioned, argued, objected, and was convinced. There was a change in her and Robert could not but notice it; at the same time he was thankful to find that it had strengthened rather than lessened their friendship. He took pains to make his theories clear to her, and he found a willing pupil. He instructed her day by day, preparing his lesson carefully, and when the time came, forgetting her, as was his wont, and losing himself completely in his subject. The two were good comrades, friends by nature; there was no constraint between them. They attacked a subject with the same breezy energy and followed it up with a common uncompromising adherence to truth.

There was not much in either of them that it was difficult for the other to understand; certainly not enough on Ruth's side to justify the minute explanations of her conduct and her character that in defiance to her habitual reserve, she gave to Robert. For his part he was perfectly contented in this friendship; whether this content would last was another question, but at the present moment he had no rival and therefore no temptation, and Ruth was as a dear sister to him and a good friend. His dreams of her in another relationship had been put away. He was convinced now that she would never look upon him in the light of a lover, and having grappled with his disappointment, had grown to some extent familiar with the idea of renunciation. Whatever happened, he was determined that his love for her should work in his life towards a greater achievement, a more rigid adherence to his principles. Elizabeth's words were still in his ears. "It is not less love we want in the world, Robert, but more—a great deal more." He had believed Lady Templeton then and now he was trying to carry his faith into practice.

Thus the spirit of Elizabeth still held sway over those who had loved her. No word of hers was forgotten. Opinions that even in the old days were barely uttered now exercised their silent influence. Lady Templeton had rarely made a direct request, rarely expressed a desire; now that she was dead, her family realized how few her needs had been. But she had made one request to her daughter emphatically and with tears, and that request had cost Ruth many a bitter searching of heart—for it remained still unfulfilled. Rose de Winton could not be found. Ruth felt extraordinarily helpless, for she was bound by her solemn promise to her mother to keep the matter secret, and for this reason, even if there had been no other, she was deterred from applying to the one person who in her opinion might have helped her, Hugh Templeton. The more she thought of the episode the more puzzled she became: Lady Templeton's agitated manner, her passionate appeal, convinced her that this was more than an ordinarily deserving case. At one time it struck her that her mother might have discovered the fact which Ruth herself did not

learn of until later, that the girl whom Lady Templeton was so anxious to befriend was also the girl who had been Templeton's mistress. And yet that was hardly possible; for Elizabeth had heard every detail of Ruth's long visit to Trevean, and Rose Gray had been described to her over and over again. If, therefore, she knew the identity of Rose Gray and Rose de Winton, she could scarcely have expressed a desire that her daughter and Rose should never meet. "You are not even to see her!" Ruth remembered the rush of the abrupt words, terminating in that sudden cry as she had flung herself back sobbing among her cushions. Evidently, had she known the truth, Lady Templeton would have been as much astonished as her daughter. Monica Holden had done all that was possible to further the inquiry: the police had been notified, detectives employed, and no possible means short of advertising had been neglected. Rose was traced to London and to the house of Mrs. de Winton—the cabman who had driven her from Paddington remembered her well. But Rosalie remained obstinately silent. Her daughter had come to her, she averred, for a few minutes, and had then left giving no reason for her departure. Mrs. de Winton, thinking that she had gone to a friend's house for the night, expected to see her in the morning, and then, as she did not appear, had grown anxious and had placed the matter with the police. She had done this of her own accord and was therefore inclined to resent Monica Holden's interference. Here all further evidence stopped. The girl had disappeared from the face of the earth. It was Rosalie's private opinion that Rose had met her death in some mysterious manner, but there was no evidence forthcoming and it did not suit her purpose to encourage the notion. If Rose had departed this life, she would not be able to draw the money settled upon her by Sir Raymond—that much was clear. Two years was a long time to look forward to, but Rosalie dated the passing of time by the payment of monies, and this payment would come to Rose either at her mother's death or on her twenty-fifth birthday. The girl knew as little of all this as of her parentage, for Rosalie had thought well to keep her in ignorance of both.

Mrs. de Winton was therefore more than annoyed at her daughter's disappearance. The year had brought her a bad run of luck, and it was this bad luck that had prompted her secret visit to Lady Templeton. That was a daring project, but it had succeeded. Mrs. de Winton had proved her identity beyond dispute, and Elizabeth, overcome by grief and horror, had promised to do all in her power to help Sir Raymond's daughter, whom her mother described as being in a perilous condition owing to want of money. The story that Rosalie had poured into Lady Templeton's ear was one of betrayal and desertion, the innocent child paying the penalty for the guilty parents. She very wisely omitted all mention of her allowance, and returned to Princes Street with a substantial check in her purse and abundant hopes for the future. That visit testified to the genius of Rosalie, for her first intention had been to blackmail Sir Raymond through his wife; but in Elizabeth's gentle greeting she had fathomed something of her nature, and before speaking a single word had altered her purpose, relying upon charity to work her will rather than fear. In this Rosalie was very wise, but she did not know of Lady Templeton's failing health or what consequences a shock to one in such a condition might entail. Before she had planned her second campaign Elizabeth Templeton was dead, but of this, Rosalie, who only glanced at her daily papers intermittently, was unaware. The news, could she have heard it, would have astonished her considerably, but not so much as the fact that a rigorous search then being made for her daughter was directed by Ruth Templeton. Enjoined upon her—so Ruth held—as a sacred trust, this quest became an abiding preoccupation. Behind her quiet, everyday-life at Templeton, behind her studies with Robert Trelling and the new interests that he had brought her, the thought remained distinct of Rose de Winton—the willowy girl with the sensitive face, wide blue eyes, and bright hair seemed to have become a part of Ruth's life. She longed with all her soul to accomplish her mission, not only for her mother's sake, but for the sweet sake of Rose herself. Had she been deserted by Templeton, she asked herself, left desolate and friend-

less to face the world alone? She did not like to think about it.

Monica Holden was expected shortly on a visit to Templeton, and, with every day that passed, Ruth's longing for her presence, which would give her at last an opportunity of freely discussing Rose de Winton, increased. She had not seen Monica since her mother's death, and even the fullest letters appeared meager.

When the time came and Monica had actually arrived, Ruth led her off to her room at the first possible moment in order to pelt her with questions. She drew a chair up to the blazing fire.

"Now, sit down, Aunt Monica," she said impetuously, "and talk. Oh, how I have looked forward to this! What does Mrs. Renowden think?"

Monica leant forward, spreading out her thin white hands to the blaze. The light danced on the gray hair, the gray eyes, and the strong, clear-cut features.

"Mrs. Renowden thinks that Mr. Templeton has left her," she replied slowly, "and that she has died of a broken heart. It has not occurred to the dear woman that Rose was never married to him, and I have not undeceived her. She is quite sure about the broken heart. Poor child! Poor Rose! I'm afraid, though, that people don't die of broken hearts quite so easily!"

"Don't they?" said Ruth quickly. A sudden thought of her mother had shot into the girl's mind, she could not have told why. Possibly the presence of Monica had revived the remembrance of the last time that they had all been together. "One cannot tell why people die!" she said slowly. "If mother had had any trouble, people would have said that she had died of a broken heart—as it is, they can't say why she died. But Rose isn't dead—if she were dead we should have heard."

"It's so extraordinary that we can't trace her," went on Monica; "we know exactly where she went to and how she was dressed. She left all her grand clothes with Mrs. Renowden; the poor old thing can't touch them without crying. Do

you know she went to consult that old witch-woman—Meg Doon? But they all say now that Meg has lost her second-sight since Ann Hand has gone.”

“Ann Hand is making Robert’s fortune in Paris,” replied Ruth.

“Ah!” said Monica reflectingly. “Poor Ann!” She stared into the fire for a moment, then abruptly: “Ruth, did your mother know of the relationship between Rose and Mr. Templeton?”

“No,” returned Ruth decidedly, “that at least was spared her. She never associated Rose Gray with Rose de Winton, thank God! But in some extraordinary way the thought of Rose pained her terribly. I wish I knew—I wish she had told me more. She only said that she did not know the girl—had never seen her, and that the mother was not a good woman.”

“She is not,” said Monica drily.

“But Mrs. de Winton knew mother! Did you mention her when you called at—where is it?—10 Princes Street?”

Monica shook her head. “I did not see the use of doing so. I found her very taciturn—very much disinclined to give any information concerning her daughter. I told her nothing. She thought that I was a chance acquaintance that Rose had picked up at Tremellon, and obviously she did not think much of me. My style of dressing was not to her taste, or my way of doing my hair. Her expression said as much as she opened the door for me.”

There was a long silence. Ruth sat with her head in her hands, thinking deeply. When she looked up Miss Holden saw that she was crying.

“What can we do, Aunt Monica?” she said brokenly. “Isn’t it awful? We have given a promise and we do nothing. I think about it day and night.”

“It might not be a bad plan to consult a lawyer,” replied Monica; “what about Mr. Barnes?”

“Father’s solicitor!” said Ruth quickly. “Oh, no, impossible! Father is never to know—no one is to know but you and me! That’s the mystery—the extraordinary mystery of

the thing. But you can't think how strongly she insisted on it. I promised her with my whole soul that I would keep the secret."

"Then we must think of something else!" replied Monica kindly. "Don't worry, dear child," for as she spoke Ruth relapsed into her former position. "Don't cry. We haven't given up hope. We will find her yet."

She rose and walked over to Ruth's chair. "That attitude is not like you, Ruth," she said after a short pause. "That is not the attitude of the woman who is to find Rose de Winton, and help her when she is found."

Ruth sat up slowly, drying her eyes. "I know," she said. "It was a coward's attitude, but I think I am different somehow. I am not so confident as I was. I——" Before she could finish her sentence there came a knock at the door. It was her maid.

"George says that Dr. Trelling has come in and is asking for you, Miss Ruth."

The girl flushed hotly as she jumped up from her chair. For a moment she stood silent.

"Well, my dear," said Monica, "do you want to go?"

"I promised Robert that I would look over some work with him this afternoon, but—I don't like to leave you, Aunt Monica!"

Miss Holden smiled. "Don't trouble about me, Ruth, dear. I shall be quite happy up here with a book until dinner time. You mustn't keep Dr. Trelling waiting. I am glad that you and he seem to be such good friends."

"Oh," said Ruth quickly, "we were always splendid friends. I don't know what I should do without Robert. I am awfully interested in his work too. Good-by then, Aunt Monica, till dinner time."

She closed the door quickly, and after she had gone Miss Holden sat still listening to her retreating footsteps. She was tired after her long journey, and the interview with Ruth—brief as it was, had given her plenty to think about. Soon she also rose to her feet, as though she found her thoughts too baffling for present consideration. She wished to put them

away from her for a time, postpone them as it were, and therefore, without much idea as to what she should do next, she crossed the room to the window. Ruth's sitting room opened out of the room that had once been Lady Templeton's, and the windows faced the same way. It was twilight now, and the terrace looked black and deserted, although scillas showed their tiny heads in some sheltered corners, and clusters of snowdrops shone here and there with a pure radiance. The river swept its protecting arm about the terrace, and beyond it the gray meadows crept up to the distant shadowy poplars. Monica was restless, and after a glance at the garden, she softly opened the door into the next room. It was warm and vivid, a strange contrast to the misty world outside. A crackling wood fire burned in the grate, and its light danced upon the rose-covered walls and hangings. The room was untouched, and as gay and full of color as it had always been. To Monica, who had not as yet known Templeton without its mistress, it seemed extraordinary that she should not be there. The room held her: she moved about it, arranging the flowers or sorting out the books. Her gentle laughter, it seemed, still hung about the curtains: the rose-colored cushions still kept the impression of the fair head. Then with a sigh, Monica turned again to the gray window. The outlook was less desolate, for two figures were walking up and down talking earnestly—Ruth and Robert Trelling. Monica smiled at the sight, although her eyes had filled suddenly with tears.

"If Elizabeth could only have lived to see that," she said to herself, "she would have wanted nothing more—and yet!"

She turned away from the window and walked back into Ruth's room.

Later on in the evening, when good-nights had been said, and the house was quiet, Monica Holden sat for a long time staring into the fire. The new order had impressed itself upon her, and she no longer felt the presence of Elizabeth in the same degree. But as the minutes passed and she sat on, seeing many pictures in the fire, the most vivid of them all was that which she had looked on at first from Elizabeth's own room,

—Ruth and Robert Trelling. Again she smiled, and again a mist rose before her eyes.

“She will never love him with the freshness of a first love. She is only twenty years old, but her girlhood has gone by.”

Her shabby note-book lay open upon the table beside her. There was a new entry, the ink of which was still wet.

The hope we have lived for is sometimes fulfilled after we are dead: but when it is fulfilled it is no longer that for which, in our ignorance, we had hoped.

Chapter Twenty-Four

"The sordid is that which ignores the spiritual part of man, concentrating on the appearance rather than the reality. Such concentration upon externals results in a life that is niggardly, dreary, and commonplace."—*The Thoughts of Monica Holden.*

THE year moved on through its months, and now daffodils were blowing and young lambs lay by the ewes. Monica Holden had come and gone, having brought to Ruth some comfort, but leaving behind her, in a sense, an added loneliness. Of this loneliness Robert Trelling was aware. He felt that the girl depended increasingly on him for friendship and support, and yet the demand on him for friendship, and no more, cost him increasingly a sustained effort. He was aware of a growing uneasiness when he was with Ruth, and yet he could hardly bear to be away from her, and therefore availed himself of Sir Raymond's repeated invitations to stay at Templeton. But what could he do to be of use to her in such circumstances? All he had to offer—all he was permitted, it seemed, to offer—was the pedantry of good advice.

He was now delivering in London a course of public lectures on his own subject, under the title of the "Power of Mind," and in a few weeks his hospital was to be opened in Paris. Sure of his ground, he had the rare power of translating science into everyday language. His success had been startling; lay opinion and professional opinion had at the same time been stirred.

Ruth accompanied him to one of these lectures, and later it was arranged that he should escort her back to Templeton. She had followed every word closely as Trelling set forth his views on Matter, showing it merely as an expression of Mind. He showed Mind in every phase of creation down to the microcosm, which, living its own life but obedient to the over-

ruling mind which determines its existence, forms part of the human frame. To the unscientific person who merely wanted a rule of health he tendered a maxim, "Take care of the Mind; the body will take care of itself."

Ruth listened, curiously excited. The crowded room and tense character of the lecture, the floods of questions at the finish, and above all the evident enthusiasm with which Robert had inspired his hearers—all these helped to stimulate her imagination.

When Trelling came down the platform steps he walked straight up to her.

"Well," he said, "was it all right?"

Their eyes met in a close comradeship. It was to her that he came as to no other for judgment, and each knew it.

"It was splendid!" she said drawing a deep breath. "I don't wonder that they applauded."

There was something in her tone that he had never known there before; and for a moment he could find no words in which to thank her. Together in silence they walked down the fast-emptying lecture room.

Ruth did not speak again until they were in the cab driving towards the station.

"Robert, it was splendid," she repeated letting her hand for one instant rest on his.

Her unconscious touch fell upon him strangely. It recalled him to his conception of their understanding. In a moment he was deliberate and self-controlled.

"Then I am a proud man," he said quietly, "for I would rather please you than anybody."

Resolutely he shut his eyes to all in Ruth that pleaded, without her knowledge, for something warmer and more human. Her loneliness he assured himself would end some day in marriage. The thought braced him. Even while the girl's eyes betrayed her, he, confident in his resolution, translated their speech into a trick of light and shade and busied himself with the study of the subliminal consciousness.

With every day that passed Ruth grew more detached from her surroundings. Templeton Manor was no longer her home

as she had known it hitherto. Mrs. Whitter, it seemed, lived there now. Sir Raymond referred everything to her, and scarcely bestowed a word or a thought upon his daughter. Occasional visitors came and went, but no one, with the exception of Vivian Vissian, remained for longer than a few days. That bright youth came for a fortnight, and at the end of half the time Robert Trelling found he had an engagement in town and tore himself away, routed by the "little language."

"Aunt Tom," said Vivian, "why is Ruth so cross to Vivian? Is the nasty Dockens breaking her heart?"

"It's supposed to be broken already," returned Mrs. Whitter curtly. "It can't break again, unless it's got nine lives like a cat!"

Vivian had brought his paint box, and while he was at Templeton he employed his spare time by painting Ruth's portrait. During his work he became a different being; the picture emerged vigorous out of shadow and the little language was forgotten.

All Ruth was held upon the gray canvas—the soft eyes, the lips, the delicate contours. It was a thing of motion rather than repose, and it had about it a certain fluidity. It suggested force, but the force of water or of air. In it nothing was directly stated, though much was implied. It held a promise of greater beauty than that actually displayed. It was full of veiled color: the whole was—Ruth.

"There!" cried Vivian on the last day of the sittings, as he threw down his brushes. "It is finished. I have painted not wisely but too well, Ruth, for I've fallen in love with you. Do you mind!"

"How nice!" Ruth heaved a little sigh as she shook off the stiffness of a sustained pose. "I am so glad, dear Vivian, now you will give up the little language to please me, and we will go down happily to tea."

On their way from the studio (Sir Raymond's studio, which contained the celebrated bust, done by Dossti while the Baronet was in Rome) Mrs. Whitter's voice from the gallery was heard calling Ruth.

"You go down, Vivian," said the girl. "Mrs. Whitter wants me. I'll come in a minute."

"Oh, Aunt Tom," began the young man, but he stopped short, for Ruth had turned suddenly and faced him.

"Vivian, *don't!*" she cried with a sudden outburst that seemed almost inconsequent and strangely at variance with her usual reserve. "Don't! Don't call her—that."

Vivian studied her mobile face; the under lip was still quivering; there was something in it that he could not altogether account for, although afterwards in considering the matter he satisfied himself with a reason.

"Very well, Ruth," he said quietly, "I won't if you don't like it." He walked down a few steps in silence, then he turned. "By the way, that portrait is a wedding present for you."

"But I'm not going to be married."

"It can wait until you are!"

"But what if that day never comes?"

"In that case, after your death it will revert to its owner or his heirs," said Vivian gloomily. "Now go away, if you want to; only don't be long, or I'll learn Esperanto. It's too dull to talk the same language as everybody else!"

Ruth ran down the passage that led into the gallery. Here the air was heavy with the odor of hothouse flowers, for Mrs. Whitter had appropriated a corner of it for her own writing table, and wherever she sat she demanded a scented atmosphere. Sir Raymond had given orders that whatever flowers she desired should be sent in from the hothouses, and in consequence masses of lilies, camelias, and other delicate blooms marked those parts of the house that she especially affected. She now sat at her table balancing a pen on two fingers. Her blotter in turquoise morocco inlaid with purple pansies was open before her and at her side lay a pile of letters. Time had changed Pansy very little; it had lined and pointed her face and had emphasized a certain shrewdness in the eyes. But as yet it had spared her hair, which was naturally yellow, and her skin, fortified by a careful treatment, defied the years. She now wore a tea gown—green over purple—and amethysts

shone at her neck and in her ears. Sir Raymond had told her that in that dress she was indeed a pansy. "Pansies for thoughts," he had added gallantly.

"Dear Sir Raymond," murmured the lady in reply, "how enchanting of you to notice my little gown! And the comparison—how delicious!"

When Mrs. Whitter saw Ruth she went forward to meet her and slipping her hand through the girl's arm grasped her fingers affectionately.

"Did you want me?" said Ruth coldly; her hand lay as though paralyzed in the soft clasp.

"Little icicle," murmured Pansy; "why are you always so reserved with me, darling?"

She loosened her grasp and as Ruth did not reply, she pulled forward a chair. "Do sit down for a few minutes. I have got such a horrid difficult thing to say to you, and if you were anybody but Ruth Templeton I should be afraid to say it."

Pansy laid her hand upon a letter on the top of the pile, and Ruth, following its movement, felt a sudden shock. She well knew the handwriting on that envelope—every twist and curl of it was familiar to her, and it was associated in her mind with an unendurable disgrace. She felt as though the stain of it had remained.

Her rigidity increased; without moving a muscle she sat silent, looking straight in front of her.

"You don't make it very easy for me, Ruth dear," said Pansy in a plaintive voice; "I told you that I had something difficult to say."

"Then for Heaven's sake say it!" returned Ruth abruptly.

Her tone was scarcely audible; so great a contrast to her usual clear contralto, that Mrs. Whitter was startled.

"Ah, I see!" She made a sudden sympathetic gesture. "You recognized the handwriting!"

Ruth was silent.

Then Pansy changed her method; it was war now between the two, the battle was to be a sharp one, but not sharper than she had foreseen.

"Ruth, dear," she said in a voice that she hoped was gentle, but at the same time firm, "your father and I——"

"Who?" said Ruth quickly.

"Sir Raymond and I——"

"Why—you?"

"Ruth, dear!"

Ruth had a hot temper, and her self-control was not proof against this covert assault.

"Oh!" she cried losing patience altogether. "I can't bear this much longer! What have you got to say?"

Pansy's small mouth tightened at the corners. She considered the girl's manner insolent, and since she had insisted, she should have the truth untempered.

"Only that it is time you conquered your disappointment over Hugh Templeton," she replied coldly. "People say that you are wearing the willow!"

Ruth's face was now entirely bloodless, but at Mrs. Whitter's words her eyes flashed into a new fire of indignation.

"You are a brave woman, to dare to mention his name in my presence!" she said, lifting her head proudly.

Mrs. Whitter, looking at her, reflected that these last months had indeed made a difference in Ruth Templeton, she was no longer a child. All the more reason that she should learn her lesson once and for all—learn it thoroughly and quickly. She came to the point.

"I think that I am a *very* brave woman!" she said slowly. "However, you had better accustom yourself to hearing his name mentioned without this display of emotion, for he is coming here next week."

Ruth stood up quickly. "Coming here!" Her tone was incredulous; her manner jerky and excited. "Impossible!"

"Nonsense! It's quite possible," returned Pansy, snapping. There was no need now for caution; she had reached her goal. She could speak out her mind. "I've no patience with you!" she went on; "what has he done? Only what ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have done under similar circumstances. If you had not been brought up so absurdly, you would know that well enough. You've broken off your en-

gagement and spoken your mind pretty clearly, I should imagine, but that's no reason for behaving like this! However, you can't refuse to see the wretched man, for, as I said before, he is coming here next week."

There was a sudden silence. Mrs. Whitter laid down the pen she had been playing with, and shut the turquoise morocco blotter decisively; then she clasped her delicate jeweled fingers together and rested them upon it; her attitude was one of finality.

Ruth remained speechless; astonishment as much as anger held back her words; she had for the first time in dealing with Mrs. Whitter felt the iron underneath the velvet. Thoughts were also difficult; they were superseded by emotion. She could only stand still and stare in amazement at the slender figure in front of her gleaming in green and purple.

Mrs. Whitter shrugged her shoulders and gathered up her letters walked slowly down the gallery. "Minx!" she said to herself, then—"fool!" She had lost her temper and that annoyed her. Also she knew in her heart that had she tried she could have managed the situation more skillfully. But dislike towards Ruth, Elizabeth Templeton's child, had overmastered her. She disliked her for the sake of her mother, but more cordially for her own sake. She disliked her for her face and figure, her thoughts, her voice, and the turn of her phrases. She had disliked Elizabeth in the same way. Elizabeth, it seemed to Mrs. Whitter, had been as one clad in an armor which her most cunning weapons had failed to penetrate. Invariably courteous and gentle, Lady Templeton had treated Pansy in the manner of a considerate hostess; but when she had said clever things Lady Templeton had failed to understand them. She had never ignored the little woman, and when she was in the room always found occasion for drawing her into the conversation; at the same time, as Mrs. Whitter noticed bitterly, she never asked her opinion about anything in the world.

When the rustle of Pansy's skirts had passed, Ruth tried to bring her thoughts into some manner of order. At present they were in an odd jumble. It was intolerable to her that

Mrs. Whitter should have suggested such a thing; more intolerable that Hugh Templeton could have thought it possible that she could acquiesce in it. Then she thought of Sir Raymond. What had he to say to the monstrous proposition? The idea held her mind in a state of chaotic misery, for her father would not readily, it seemed, fit into any forecast of things as she conceived it. Of course he must interfere and explain the situation to Mrs. Whitter—there was no doubt about that! But what view would he take? Her father was still something of a mystery to Ruth. The infallibility which haloes the parent had not yet completely passed away. Egoist as he was, Ruth still believed in his clear honor, and never doubted that, when it was made plain to him, he would eventually uphold her. Then her thoughts drifted off from Sir Raymond to Mrs. Whitter, and the extraordinary position she had made for herself at Templeton. She was like an Alpine climber who, ice-ax in hand, carves out his foot-holds on the rock above him. Ruth had never faced the thing definitely before, but now suddenly and most painfully it lay beneath her eyes. While she had been dreaming, Mrs. Whitter had insensibly slipped into her mother's place. Seeing for the first time, she blamed herself passionately for what had happened. During the week that had followed Lady Templeton's death she had been so stunned with grief that she had not given a thought to the household; but all had gone on smoothly as before, except that M. Papillon had sent the Menu for the day to Mrs. Whitter; there was no one else to send it to, as Sir Raymond objected to such previous information, and only enjoyed his dinner when it came as a surprise. Mrs. Whitter had complimented the chef upon the excellence and variety of his dishes. Mrs. Worrall, the housekeeper, also, when she had gone to Sir Raymond on the subject of dismissing a housemaid, had been referred, not to Miss Templeton, but to Mrs. Whitter. In this the good woman was not surprised; for having known Ruth all her life, she still looked upon her as a child, and she found Mrs. Whitter both capable and sympathetic.

Pansy, it appeared, understood to the full the difficulty of

procuring servants, and therefore Mrs. Worrall unburdened her domestic soul and became from henceforward her staunchest ally. Mrs. Whitter even inspected the china with the housekeeper (Sir Raymond possessed some very beautiful specimens of Worcester and Crown Derby, which were Mrs. Worrall's special care and pride), and had afterwards condescended to take a cup of tea with her in Mrs. Worrall's pretty sitting room, surrounded by photographs of the Templeton family at various periods of their lives.

Ruth did not know all this. She only knew that in some amazing way Mrs. Whitter was occupying the place which should now by right have been her own, and that she was left in the position of an incompetent schoolgirl rather than than of a grown up daughter of the house. It seemed incredible, but it was none the less true. One evening at dinner Sir Raymond had applauded a *soufflé en surprise*, which became henceforward, without any action on Miss Templeton's part, a weekly dish; and later, Ruth had sat silent at the end of the table listening while her father thanked Mrs. Whitter for her consideration of his tastes. The timetables in the visitor's bedrooms were altered without her knowledge, and one night when she detected a surprisingly delicious scent among her bedclothes she found that a tiny muslin bag of lavender had been sewn into the frills of her pillow case. Mrs. Whitter had given orders that all the linen should be treated in the same way.

"Lavender is too delicious!" she had replied when Miss Templeton questioned her on the subject.

The remark was irrefutable; the matter was disposed of.

But there are limits to the endurance of an only daughter, even when she has neglected her duty; and Ruth thought that in the last interview in the gallery the limit had been reached. Hugh Templeton should not be invited to her father's house; of that she was determined; further, she would take from henceforward the reins of government into her own hands; and if Mrs. Whitter demurred, there was no objection, as far as Ruth could see, against her bringing her visit to a close.

She sat for some time considering the thing from all points and rehearsing arguments for Sir Raymond's ear. The more she pondered it, the clearer it became to her that she was right. And in imagination her reasoning was unanswerable. Sir Raymond might not wish Mrs. Whitter to be summarily ejected, but she was positive that he would not deny to his daughter her rightful position as mistress of his house. Ruth's spirits rose and she became almost cheerful as she went downstairs to carry out her project.

She found her father deep in consultation with a neighboring squire over the difficult question of Radden's Corner, which was not yet disposed of; and when, after that, they proceeded to the state of the country and difficulties of party government, Ruth knew that it would be a good hour before Sir Raymond would be free to listen to her. However, the old gentleman at last mounted his horse and rode away, and Ruth requested a few minutes' conversation with the baronet.

Sir Raymond looked first at her, somewhat blankly, and then at his watch. That was a favorite trick of his when he expected to be bored; it testified to the value of his time, and supplied a necessary warning to his interlocutor that it must not be wasted; Ruth smiled now as she watched him. How often had Elizabeth noticed the same action and noticed it with the same smile.

"Don't be afraid, father," said Ruth; "I shall not keep you long."

"That's right, my dear," returned Sir Raymond, leading the way into the library. He sat down in an armchair, leant back, and folded his white hands in resignation. "Shut the door, please."

Ruth did as she was told and pulled up a chair opposite him. From the open window she could hear the voices of Mrs. Whitter and Vivian Vissian squabbling over some game. Tea had been long since cleared away. It did not occur to Ruth to wonder if she had been missed; evidently not, for nobody had come in search for her.

"Now, my dear," said Sir Raymond, fixing his fine gray

eyes upon her; "what can I do for you? Speak to the purpose and come at once to the point."

Ruth hesitated. There was something in his manner that always forced upon her a sense of immaturity. When she was with him she had felt like a little girl "with pockets in her pinafores"—as she had often expressed it to her mother—like Tenniel's Alice, half over-bold, yet half afraid. He always spoke to her from a great height of wisdom and of experience, and since her engagement had been broken off, the distance between them had increased; indeed Ruth was conscious of having fallen far below her father's standard. Now she hesitated and stammered.

"Well, my dear, I am ready; I am waiting." Sir Raymond clasped and unclasped his white impatient hands.

"Father, I——"

All Ruth's rehearsing was in vain. In her nervousness she blurted out vague formless sentences. "Hugh Templeton cannot come here," that was the end and substance of her appeal. "I cannot allow Hugh Templeton to come here."

At first Sir Raymond did not grasp her meaning, but as it became clear to him, his attitude grew tense. He sat upright, knitting himself together; his skin it seemed tightened itself over his cheek bones, and his features sharpened; his eyes snapped; his nervous, blue-veined hands tapped the table irritably.

"And I cannot allow my daughter to dictate to me as to my choice of guests. Hugh Templeton is more than my guest; he is my heir—the heir of Templeton. I have invited him to spend a week here, and I see no reason to withdraw my invitation. Have you anything more to say?"

For the second time that afternoon Ruth forced back the rage that rose to her lips. She was silent, too much humiliated by such a speech to find a reply.

"Well, my dear?" Sir Raymond's bland tones broke across her thoughts. And with them came the knowledge that she was here for a definite purpose, which purpose in her sudden anger she had lost sight of. The minutes were slipping by and she had not even explained what had just happened in

the gallery. She had lost both her presence of mind and her opportunity; the thought steadied her, she looked up quickly to find her father's eyes bent upon her in an amused scrutiny. She was helpless, and her helplessness evidently entertained the Baronet. For a moment Ruth felt definitely that she disliked him.

"Father," she began, and again the words were not those that she had intended. "I cannot meet Hugh Templeton. It is quite impossible. You don't know what he said to me. Mother knew, but you——"

"You must forget all this, my dear," returned Sir Raymond quietly. "You must meet your cousin at some time or another; why not now? Only when you do meet him, it must be with perfect equanimity, not betraying by a look or a gesture that you have any remembrance of the past. Feelings are all very well, but the feelings of a woman of the world, my Ruth, are the obedient servants of her discretion."

Dazed at his unflinching reception of her words, Ruth once again blundered into speech.

"But if you knew—if you heard—you would not ask me to do this."

"Certainly I should ask it. Bygones must be bygones. Hugh has written to me, and his letter has pleased me very much indeed. It is a becoming and proper letter. I think that this attitude of resentment that you have adopted is most unwomanly, the last thing that I should have expected of you, Ruth. You have, I hope, been brought up to a Christian standard of forgiveness: it is a deep pain to me to see you fall so far below it. And from another point of view it is very foolish. You know nothing of the world, my dear, or of the ways of the world. You must go to your elders for advice and act according to their instructions. Now I am quite sure if you go to Mrs. Whitte and ask her——"

"Oh, father!"

By brief but contentious question and answer they had arrived, it seemed, at Ruth's second grievance. It was unfortunate, for she had effected little in the matter of Hugh Templeton. Her words had simply irritated her father, but it was

clear at this point that either she must speak of Mrs. Whitter now, or not at all.

"Why must I go to ask Mrs. Whitter?" she cried passionately. "Why is Mrs. Whitter always here? Why do you put her in my place? I am twenty years of age now—quite old enough to take the place of—of——" she faltered. Since her mother's death her lips had not spoken that sacred name, and she did not finish her sentence.

Sir Raymond once more settled himself comfortably in his chair; his head was thrown back, his elbows rested on the padded arms, and the tips of his fingers touched each other lightly.

"You have a most inconsequent mind, Ruth. You are now attacking me on an entirely different subject."

"Not—attacking—father!" Her voice dropped, there was in it a note of weariness, as though she had already found the contention beyond her powers.

Sir Raymond caught it, and with the instinct of true arrogance, grew angry for the first time. "Yes, indeed—attacking me!" The premonition of defeat in his daughter's tones had diverted his thoughts from her now wholly to himself. Self-pity swayed him; he rose from his seat and, resting his fingers on the table, stood up,—a very Lear,—face-to-face with filial ingratitude.

"Listen to the facts, please," he said shortly. "In order to save you anxiety at a time of terrible——" Ruth stopped him with an imploring gesture; her grief was too recent for her to be able to bear any reference to it. "I do not wish to hurt you unnecessarily," continued Sir Raymond with dignity; "but I am afraid that I must go into details in order to make your position clear. Well, then—to save you from worry during a period of intense mental strain, I invited a dear and valued friend—one who has known you from the cradle—to bear upon her shoulders the more arduous share of your duties. Later, finding in you an immaturity that astonished me, I begged Mrs. Whitter to remain here for a short time to aid me by her wisdom and experience in giving you that insight into the world—our world—of which your mother—

saintly as she was—indeed perhaps because of that very saintliness—kept you so long in ignorance. Your behavior towards your cousin has now proved beyond dispute the necessity for such a course. I could not have supplied you with a more amiable or accomplished companion than Mrs. Whitter—a lady who combines beauty and virtue with extensive culture and a knowledge of the world that is extraordinary. What is the result? You fly at me and with a childish petulance that can hardly be treated seriously. You take me to task for my conduct. You—a young girl fresh from the schoolroom—command me to close my doors upon my nephew and to place the reins of government in your inexperienced hands. I can only reply that this interview is the best possible answer to such a request, the best possible proof of my wisdom in doing what I have done. The reins of government are better where they are.”

Sir Raymond brought his peroration to a close with a sweeping gesture which, according to the canons of the grand manner, ended with his words. The little altercation was over and the Baronet had forgotten his momentary annoyance in the pleasure of listening to the tones of his own voice. “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do,” he murmured gently, as he looked once more at his watch; then he turned to his daughter with the serenity brought about by duty fulfilled.

“It is time to dress for dinner,” he said in an altered voice; “the bell will ring in a moment. Look your best, my child. Remember, youth flies. Do not trouble any more over your foolishness in seeking this interview. I will forget it, my dear—forget it completely as though it had never been. I will be to you in the future what I have been to you in the past, an indulgent, but”—here Sir Raymond paused to give effect to his words,—“a conscientious father.”

He then made as though to kiss his daughter upon the brow, but Ruth’s head did not bend to receive the caress. However, at that moment the dressing-bell rang, so, with a little deprecating gesture at the foolishness of youth, the Baronet walked lightly away.

Ruth felt like a shuttlecock bandied between two experi-

enced players. She had passed from Mrs. Whitter to meet a more stupefying blow from Sir Raymond's hand. She was entirely alone. To argue with Sir Raymond was, she knew well, only to throw herself against an unyielding wall; but for the moment she had lost sight of previous experience and now the old knowledge returned to her with a shock.

She walked up to her bedroom, dismissed her maid, who was in attendance, and stood listlessly at the window looking out. Inside, her fire burnt brightly and her white evening dress lay spread out upon the bed. Her dressing gown and slippers waited by the dressing table, but she made no attempt to put them on. Instead, she stood straining her eyes at the window.

As she stood there a wordless cry went up from Ruth's heart, the natural cry of the child bereft of the mother's love. Outside through the mist came the bleating of new lambs, but they, at least, had warm comfort and protection. She was alone, and this was the first battle she had had to fight unaided. Alone we live and alone we die, but the child who has grown up in the warm atmosphere of a mother's love, or the wife who has been protected from the world by the tenderness of a husband, does not understand the bitterness of life until this last fact has been forced in like a knife upon the heart. Some never realize it, but go forth into the Unknown as from a nursery of love. Such souls do not need, it seems, to be born anew, but live from the beginning to the end under the smile of God. But we see them, be it remembered, only with human eyes, and know in reality as little of their sorrow as of their joy.

Chapter Twenty-Five

"He who bends to himself a joy
Does the Wingéd life destroy,
But he who kins the joy as it flies,
Lives in eternity's sun rise."

BLAKE

RUTH sent down word that she had a headache and would dine that night in her own room. She wanted time in which to justify to herself the position she had instinctively taken up. She was determined not to meet Hugh Templeton, but she did not know how best to avoid such a meeting. However, at present there was no need to decide anything; she was safe in her own room and after a night's rest she would know better what to do.

Yet, even here, behind the closed door, there was scant shelter. The servant who brought up her dinner handed her a letter, and as she looked at it, she discovered that the events of the afternoon had broken what would otherwise have come to her as a painful shock—a letter addressed to her in Hugh Templeton's handwriting.

She tore it open, nerving herself to face this much of the past without flinching: it ran as follows:

CLARIDGE'S HOTEL, March 10th.

MY DEAR RUTH:

Uncle Raymond has written asking me to Templeton. I am deeply touched by his kind letter, but of course it would be impossible for me to accept his invitation until I had your permission to do so. Will you forgive me for the past—not only for what happened that last day, but for all the pain that I have ever made you suffer? I know what I am asking—and it is only from you that I could ask so much!

I do not remember what I said to you on the morning I left Templeton. I was mad with shame and grief, and you

must not hold me responsible for my words. Whatever they were, I retract them utterly, and I throw myself absolutely on your compassion and your goodness.

When I read in the newspaper of your terrible crushing loss, I could have given anything to have been able to write to you. Judge what it meant to me that by my own fault I had cut myself off from the possibility of uttering—I don't say comfort, for that would be to assume a power that perhaps I never had—but even common human sympathy. I would not dare to write now only that—no one they say is too great a sinner to pray to God for mercy, and for a while you were the nearest thing to God that I have ever known. Therefore, as I might say it on my knees, I ask you to forgive me.

H. T.

The letter dropped from Ruth's hands and fluttered on to the floor. Through it she felt Templeton's old power over her revive; it was a talisman; its very paper and ink, it seemed, were able to stir her. Should she once more forgive him? Why not? He had sinned against her unforgivably, but was it not the essence of her faith to pardon? Who could refuse forgiveness prayed for in such terms? How could one refuse it and remain true to the Christian ideal?

Then the old mistrust crept upon her. Were there no limits to what might in justice be required of her? Templeton had hurt her so terribly—hurt her soul, it seemed. Had she no rights of her own? In pardoning him, in welcoming him at Templeton in obedience to her father's wishes, she would deliver herself once more into his hands. She knew how it would be. From the bottom of her heart she despised him, but he still had for her a strange mesmeric power, and that, she knew well, he would use to the uttermost. Could she bear it? Would it be right for her to bear it? She picked the letter up and re-read it. Who but Templeton could have written such a letter! Who but Templeton could so use a truth to serve his purpose that in fighting him, it seemed she warred with the best part of her own soul! Who but Templeton could assume so blandly that she would be able to forgive the shame

—the insults that he had showered upon her! And who but Templeton could credit her with the attributes of a saint, and use her very desire for righteousness against her! It was the old trick—she knew it well—but her knowledge, it seemed, hardly robbed it of its force; even as she read the letter, the subtle flattery stole up to her brain and she wavered as she had wavered four months ago. “No one is too great a sinner to pray to God for mercy.”

Thus the Serpent tempted this sophisticated Eve. The insidious words no longer were “You shall be as gods knowing good and evil,” but rather “You shall be as gods saving the souls of men.”

But the grace of humility was not entirely denied to Ruth even at the hour of such temptation, although to her mind it appeared to take the form of cowardice. She shrank back from the ordeal—afraid of Templeton and afraid of herself. She buried her face in her hands; her eyes were dry but her heart, it seemed, wept within her.

When the footman came up to clear the dinner things away, she was outwardly as composed as usual.

“Dr. Trelling has suddenly arrived, miss,” said the man communicatively. “I thought you might like to know.”

Ruth felt a quick thrill of comfort. Robert was in the same house with her. He had not been expected so soon, yet he was here; she was not alone after all. She would tell him everything and he should help her to decide. He would understand. He had loved Lady Templeton and he loved her also as his own sister. He would know how passionately she desired to do right and how every force in her life seemed now to be arrayed against her—her duty to her father, her forbearance with Mrs. Whitter, her charity towards Hugh Templeton. Must she, to save her honor, refuse to consider duty, forbearance, or charity? Must she, to do right, inflict wrong? She could not tell; she could not stand alone; she needed help—some human hand stretched out to her. With burning cheeks she remembered her prayer of not so many days ago.

“Help me to need no aid from man,
That I may help all men that need.”

Ah, now she was in sore and bitter need of help, now what she craved above all else was some strong soul on whom she might rely. This support had been denied to Elizabeth Templeton, but to Ruth life was not so stern—Robert Trelling had come as though in answer to a call.

For some time Trelling had been uncertain as to whether he should go to Templeton or not. He was due in Paris in two days for the opening of his hospital, but he had a great desire to say good-by to Ruth. He wanted to find out for himself if she was well and as contented as could be hoped, for during the last visit she had shown signs of restlessness, as though she were contending with some hidden trouble of which he knew nothing. He had divined her loneliness, and he distrusted Mrs. Whitter with all his heart. These were reasons more than sufficient to excuse a visit to Templeton, but they were overruled by a third which, for the present at least, he would not acknowledge. Since the day when she had attended his lecture, he had noticed a difference in Ruth. She appeared to rely more implicitly upon his judgment, to look more eagerly for his coming; he felt for the first time in his life that he had become necessary to her. But he did not dwell upon the thought, for he was still fresh from the smart of his disappointment, and her manner towards him held none of that timid adoration which she had bestowed upon Templeton. It was perfectly frank, and if what she felt now for him was in reality the beginning of a deeper love, she did not attempt to disguise it. But Trelling was not the man to live on the crumbs of love; he would have all or nothing. And if, as he thought quite possible, Ruth had given her heart irretrievably to another man, he would leave her and go, not contentedly, but with enough restraint to prevent her from guessing the true state of affairs. This was hardly the hour for a young girl to test her own heart. He did not know why her engagement had been broken off; possibly it would be renewed—who could tell! But however that might be, she was now for the first time in her life left utterly alone. Not only was she still feeling the pang of her mother's death, but to a

nature as proud as Ruth's, the humiliation of a broken engagement must still be evident.

And he—Trelling—it seemed could comfort her. That was the thought that influenced his actions to a greater extent than he was actually aware of. Instinctively, rather than consciously, he held the knowledge that now, if ever, was the time for her to respond to the call of his nature, to answer his passion and to find her home at last. And it was this very fact that held him back. He did not want her on such terms, goaded by loneliness, by pain, by shame. He wanted her in the flush and pride of her young beauty to choose him out of all the world, to lay her hands in his, moved not by gratitude to a protector, but by the passionate love of a woman for a man, her equal and her comrade. He did not want her trembling, unstable, obedient to the sway of his stronger nature, but glorious in her surrender, exalted by the very depth and force of her passion. This was no small thing, but this was what Robert Trelling wanted, and less than this, much as he loved Ruth Templeton, he would have none of. He desired now to ascertain the extent, not of his power over her, but of her love for him.

Therefore he waited and hesitated, and after the manner of lovers tortured himself by doubts. He became moody and bad-tempered, and in spite of frenzied fits of industry his work suffered. The bacillus of love had penetrated to the subliminal consciousness.

Robert Trelling was a man of strong passions, large desires, high ambitions, held in check by an indomitable will. On one side he was a dreamer searching after the unknowable, on the other a man of sound business capacity, very much alive to the things of the world. These two aspects of his character were expressed in the two branches of his work—bacteriology and mental healing. His feet were set so firmly upon common earth, with its distinctions and degrees for the efficient, that he was free to grope about in the unknowable for misty ideals.

Shortly after his arrival a servant brought him a message that Miss Templeton, having a headache, had dined upstairs,

and would be glad to see him in her sitting room in order that he might prescribe for her. As he listened to the man's words, it seemed suddenly as though his doubts were to be answered.

Two steps at a time brought him up the staircase to Ruth's room, and she, hearing his tread, opened the door and welcomed him with joyful eyes. Indeed the relief that his presence brought her was so great that she nearly wept. It had changed everything; her despair vanished; her very room, it seemed, took on an added air of warmth and comfort.

"I think you have been spirited here," she said, laughing from pure happiness; "I want a prescription."

His face—of which hers, in its joy, had been a mere reflection—clouded suddenly in a wild anxiety. But she, still laughing, lifted a hand.

"No, no, there is nothing the matter with me. Nothing at least but worry. Listen now," she pressed her hands against her forehead, smoothing it as though a tangle of the old misery had somehow fallen upon her. "I want to tell you something, something that will—explain. I want help and there is no one to help me."

She began at the beginning and told him the story of the last six months. She told him of Hugh Templeton's arrival, of his curious power over her, of her engagement, of Rose de Winton—here she hesitated, for she would have kept that secret from all the world, only that she had reached the end of her strength, and it was necessary that Robert should know it in order to rescue her from the tangle in which she found herself involved—then she told him of her broken engagement, of Templeton's threat, and lastly of her intense unhappiness, of Mrs. Whitter, and of her interview with Sir Raymond.

As Robert Trelling listened, a furious anger against Hugh Templeton burnt in his heart, mitigated only by the relief of Ruth's deliverance. And yet he was not surprised: the facts as he now had them merely confirmed what he had already guessed. But he made no sign, although his face became grim and set. He did not wish to make the recital of such a history more difficult to her, and he was in no position to criticise

a man who had been—even if only for some weeks—preferred before him. At the same time the thought of a cherished creature such as Ruth—a being so gracious and so noble—exposed to this insult, worked in him to boiling anger. At that moment the thing most desirable in life to him would have been to lay violent hands upon Hugh Templeton. But he controlled the wild beast in him and listened to Ruth's story in black silence.

"What am I to do?" she cried in conclusion. "I am idiotically helpless! I can decide nothing. You are my friend, Robert—you were mother's friend—you must decide for me."

Before he could reply she had handed him the letter.

"Read that," she said abruptly.

He read it to the end and then he tossed it down contemptuously upon the table.

"Were you taken in by *that*?" he said shortly. The fire of his anger flickered behind his eyelids, but Ruth did not see it.

"I don't know—but—he had no right to put it on those grounds, had he?"

"No right at all."

"Do you think that I ought to forgive him?"

Trelling laughed sharply.

"Not in the sense that he desires forgiveness," he replied; "he is thirsty for coals of fire. But," here the thought of Ruth superseded even his righteous wrath with Templeton.

"If I know you at all, you have forgiven him already."

"Have I!" said Ruth slowly. It was a new idea to her.

"I can't imagine your not forgiving the devil himself if he wanted to be forgiven," replied Trelling.

Ruth tried to read his face. He was turning the matter round and placing it before her in another light. "Perhaps," she said; "I—I shouldn't like to do Hugh Templeton any harm."

"Precisely."

"But I never want to see him again."

"That is a different matter. You need never see him again; it would be more than foolish to do such a thing; it would be wrong."

Ruth leant back in her chair and drew a deep breath.

"Oh, blessed Robert! blessed man! But how can I get out of it?"

"Write and tell him that you have forgiven him, also that the matter is never to be mentioned again between you. Write him a kind but formal letter."

"And then?"

"Well, then go down to Cornwall and stay with Monica Holden while he is here. When his visit is over you can come home. Write to her now, to-night, and when the invitation comes, show it to Sir Raymond; he will hardly insist, under the circumstances, on your remaining at Templeton. It's quite simple—but—" Suddenly he looked at her more closely; her face was pale and her eyes heavy and swollen. "Good heavens! You have been tearing yourself to tatters over this business! I've given you one prescription; here is another. Go to bed now and stay there. Don't come down until eleven o'clock to-morrow morning, when I will meet you on the Terrace and we will go for a walk and talk things over. Will that do?"

"Yes, yes." Ruth gave a little sigh of content. "How very simple life is to a competent person!" Her relief was so obvious, and her pleasure in his solution of the difficulty so immense, that Trelling laughed again; but Templeton's letter was not, in his opinion, sufficient cause for the state of agitation in which he had found her.

"You have been working yourself up into a state of nervous excitement over something or other before that letter came," he said suspiciously. "Now confess!"

Ruth drooped her eyelids. "I confess, I lost my temper twice—once with Mrs. Whitter and once"—she hesitated—"with father. That is why I dined up here in my own room. I didn't want to meet either of them until I knew better what to do about Hugh. But—I'm afraid I *did* lose my temper. Perhaps that is why I'm feeling rather shaky now."

"Evidently."

As she sat in the old-fashioned chintz-covered chair, drooping, with downcast eyes, and trembling, half-laughing lips,

a wild impulse surged on Robert Trelling, an impulse to take her in his arms and kiss away her sweet half-fearful doubts. But he forced back with a grim wonder at his own self-control.

"I am afraid you have a bad temper, Ruth!"

She flashed a quick smile at him and his resolution shook.

"I wouldn't give a fig for a person who hadn't a bad temper!" he went on. He did not know what he said; his eyes were speaking one language and his tongue another, but the words came as though they held praise of the highest magnitude spoken breathlessly. He stood up. He must go at once, or he would say more than he intended saying at that moment.

"Good-night." He held out his hand gravely.

"Good-night." Ruth rose to her feet and placed her hand in his, but she did not dare to lift her eyes. After he had gone she remained standing, while her heart beat wildly. It was as though a declaration of love had passed between them.

Chapter Twenty-Six

"I must ascend my hardest path!
I have begun my loneliest wandering,
But whoever is of my kin escapeth not such an hour—an hour which
 speaketh unto him.
Whoever has spared himself—at the last faileth because of his sparing
 himself so much. Let that which maketh hard be praised. I do
 not praise the land where flows milk and honey.
But thou desirest to see the ground and background of all things,
Thus thou art compelled to mount above thyself, up, upwards, until
 thou seest below thyself."

Zarathustra.

ELEVEN o'clock next morning found Trelling pacing the Terrace restlessly. He was bound to be in Paris on the following day for the opening of his hospital, but Ruth's frank revelations the night before had brought about a further change in their relationship; a crisis was imminent, and he cursed the fate that took him from her. Yet the habit of repression was strong in him, and the force of his desire was so great that he held himself the more sternly in check. If it were not for her happiness that he should speak at that moment, he would hold his peace. The events of last night, however, had compelled him to review his resolution, for he had left her room in a strange daze, bewildered by her sweetness and the new appeal that had sounded in her voice. Whom else had she in the world but him? The thought brought a thrill with it, and for the moment he almost gloried in her loneliness. But only for a moment—Ruth's happiness was more to him than his own passion.

Love is in man the setting free of the ideal—that caged bird that flies always towards the impossible city in the heights—or it is nothing, mere transitory desire forgotten as soon as realized. In love the reality of the intangible is the thing relied upon—the stability and permanence of the unseen. And to Robert Trelling, whose days were passed in searching for

the basis of the material of life, this realization of a new faith took upon it something of the fervor of a religion.

It was therefore with a strange exaltation that he waited Ruth's coming, and when at last she actually stood before him, he had no word to say. He looked at her silently as she walked beside him. The warmth had come back to her face, there was no trace in it of last night's weariness. Strong and full of life, she was as fresh as the spring itself. The wind blew in their faces fragrant with the scent of young buds, but holding at the same time a tang, a pungency, as though in some near past it had swept down ice fields. For one moment they faced it as they turned to look down on the river. Over the distant poplars a veil of color had fallen lightly, through which their bare limbs were discernible as in a fringe of green smoke. All quivered with a sense of renewed life.

"How beautiful it is!" exclaimed Ruth suddenly.

"'Spring and the light and sound of things on earth,
Requickenings all within our green sea's girth,'"

quoted Robert. "It is the promise of it that stirs us—there is more to come. Do you smell the buds on the balsam poplar?"

The figure of a servant advancing towards them from the long window of the library checked Ruth's reply. When the man came up to her Miss Templeton heard him impatiently.

"A lady has called who wishes to see you, miss."

"A lady—at this time of the morning! What lady?"

"I don't know, miss. She didn't give a name. She—she——" the man hesitated, "she inquired first for her ladyship and——"

"Yes. Go on. You told her."

"Yes, miss. She said then that she would be glad to see you instead. She said that she had been a friend of—her ladyship's, and that her business was private and concerned you only."

"Where is she?"

"In the library, miss."

Ruth turned impatiently to Robert. "I suppose I must go!

Isn't it hateful of this person to call when I had so much—so very much to tell you?"

"Who is she?"

"I haven't the faintest idea."

"Be careful. She may be an impostor of sorts. As she has given no name, she is probably in want of money."

They strolled along in the direction of the house; at the door Ruth turned.

"Will you sit here by the Solomon's Seal?" she said, smiling. "It is so close to the library window that if my unknown visitor demands my money or my life, you can come to the rescue."

"Very well," replied Trelling, resigning himself to circumstances; "only don't expect patience from me this morning."

After she had gone he made himself comfortable in his corner and lit a cigarette. The Solomon's Seal behind him was uncurling its decorative fans of leaves, while lower down other luscious spikes of reddish green pushed away the encumbering earth. He leant down lazily to touch one with his finger-tip, half expecting it to be sticky as an opening chestnut bud, when it struck him that the voices inside the library were exceedingly distinct. Ruth's visitor was, as Trelling had surmised she might be, in need of money. Lady Templeton apparently had kept her supplied with means for some purpose, he could not tell what, since he did not listen voluntarily, and now and again her voice took a lower key. She had come that day thinking to find her, and had been met, alas, by the terrible news! Trelling could not see into the room, but here he imagined the owner of the voice applying a little handkerchief to a moist eye. He listened more attentively, for the voice captivated him; it was extraordinarily soft and sweet, sympathetic, musical, and of a peculiar *timbre*. It was as though it carried with it a caress—a velvety purr that produced in the listener a sensation as of pleasant warmth. Trelling meditated that the woman who owned that voice should be a beautiful woman; it was made for flattery, cajolery, innuendo, and subtle terms of meaning. In replying to it, Ruth's fresh tones sounded curiously hard and sharp.

They fell in abrupt questions that cut across the visitor's delicate phrases like a knife. It seemed that she questioned a great deal. Trelling lit another cigarette and wondered when the interview would be over.

But by this time Ruth's interest was so keenly, painfully aroused, that she had forgotten even him who waited for her. As she sat facing her visitor, she held between her finger and thumb a lady's visiting card—the card of Mrs. de Winton, 10 Princes Street, W. She had repressed the exclamation that rose to her lips when she first saw it, but the shock the name had given her showed itself in a quick indrawn breath and a tense setting of the shoulders. Mrs. de Winton—under the circumstances it seemed incredible! Every detail about the visitor was a subject of intense interest to Ruth—the quiet, well-cut costume, the black hat with the sweeping feather, the thin gold chain that passed twice round her neck and then hung in glittering lengths. Undoubtedly Mrs. de Winton dressed as a lady. But there was in her face a certain coarseness that contradicted the distinction of her costume. Her features were blunt and full; her beautiful neck had grown thick, while the curves of cheek and chin were lost in their redundancy; but her eyes remained always the same. Clear, wide, and blue, they were the eyes of that Rosalie who long ago had made a prisoner of Raymond Templeton; and now Raymond Templeton's daughter recognized those limpid eyes, but recognized them as she had seen them in another face, and looking out from under a sweep of golden lashes with an expression of innocent perplexity.

"Mrs. de Winton, 10 Princes Street, W." Ruth looked at the card, but it did not need any card to prove to her that here stood the mother of the girl Hugh Templeton had wronged—the mother of the girl whom Lady Templeton had so vehemently desired to befriend, the thought of whom had stirred the dying woman to that strange burst of passionate tears—the girl who had defied all efforts to track her hiding-place.

Rosalie's quick perception had realized the start of surprise with which Ruth Templeton realized her identity, and

she wondered fiercely what this signal might portend. This girl already knew something of her, but what did she know and how had she gained her knowledge? Rapid and careful reasoning brought her to a great part of the truth. Lady Templeton had, she surmised, spoken of her to her daughter, probably holding back the facts of the case, but laying on Ruth a certain responsibility for a girl whom Rosalie had described as "deeply, irretrievably injured." So far so good! Mrs. de Winton sighed with satisfaction and folded together her plump, well-gloved hands.

"It is of course on my poor Rose's behalf that I have come," she murmured. "I want a small sum, my dear Miss Templeton, a mere trifle, only two hundred pounds to——"

"Nobody knows where Rose is!" exclaimed Ruth hastily.

This was unlooked for. Yet Rosalie's quick brain instantly related the knowledge to Monica Holden inquiries. Unruffled, therefore, she held on to the thread of her sentence. "—two hundred pounds with which to conduct inquiries," she concluded triumphantly, "for, as apparently you know, my dear daughter has disappeared."

But Ruth was unmoved by her appeal. In this girl Rosalie had sterner stuff to deal with than she had met in Lady Templeton. For Ruth had not her mother's reason—quixotic though it might appear—for lenience in judging this petitioner. The wish of her heart certainly was to carry out Lady Templeton's request, but at the same time she had not the least intention of handing over money to this person who inspired in her so little trust.

"I knew of Rose's disappearance through my friend, Miss Holden," replied Ruth quietly. "She met her in Cornwall—but I think she told me she had already called upon you for information on the subject."

Rosalie nodded, pursing up her mouth. She was right then; the thing had become more involved than she had imagined, there were wheels within wheels here. For a moment she asked herself if the truth about Rose's visit to Cornwall could be known. But she dismissed the thought at once. Hugh Templeton could be relied upon; none of his relations would know

of his doings. Still the situation was complicated, and she waited for more light.

Ruth went on talking. "I am making inquiries myself," she said, "and I shall want what money I have for that purpose. In any case I could not have given you so large a sum as two hundred pounds, as I have not got it. My whole allowance is only three hundred a year until I come of age. I am sorry, but, as you see, I can do nothing."

Her tone and the sudden chilliness of her manner implied that no more was to be said upon the subject. It had in it the effect of a dismissal, and a dismissal was a thing that Mrs. de Winton would not lightly contemplate. This chit of a girl, it seemed, had the temerity to thwart the wishes of her own mother!

"Nonsense!" Before she was aware of it, Mrs. de Winton had departed from the tone which accorded with her costume. Her anger flared. "You were twenty-one last month—in February! I am sure of it! What's the good of pretending that you can't help me. Of course you can—and what's more, you'll have to sooner or later!"

Rosalie in full command of herself was invincible, but that which warred against her more even than the powers of righteousness, was her own violent temperament. In a rage she was irretrievably her own enemy; her most hated friend could not do more harm than she could do herself. Never very accurate as to figures, she had calculated, when confronted with the fact of Elizabeth's untimely death, that Ruth would have just completed her twenty-first birthday, and would therefore be in a position easily to continue the help which Elizabeth had so lavishly assured. This had all passed through her mind in the brief interval that was given to her for consideration as she waited for Ruth's coming in the library. Now she jumped boldly to the conclusion that Miss Templeton was sufficiently afraid of her to lie about her age. And if she was afraid, then there was some reason for her fear—some fraud upon her own poor Rose. Rosalie was filled with indignation at the imagined robbery of the wronged and outcast.

"Of course you are twenty-one," she said emphatically, bringing her hand down upon the table. "Rose is twenty-four, or is it only twenty-three?" She became pensive. "Upon my word I can't remember, it's something between the two, but anyhow I know you are twenty-one, so don't try and get out of it that way!"

Miss Templeton straightened herself to rigidity, and looked at Rosalie with cold eyes. This woman, in spite of her lady-like appearance, was both underbred and unprincipled. Ruth had never before come in contact with such a person. But it was plain to her now that Mrs. de Winton had hoped to meet her mother instead of herself, and was most bitterly disappointed at the frustration of her schemes. When refused the money she asked for she had not sufficient wit or grace to remain silent over her disappointment, but in her rage credited Miss Templeton with a subterfuge that in similar circumstances she might herself have employed. Ruth's instinct was to ring the bell and dismiss her peremptorily. But on reflection she paused. This woman, this strange woman, was her only link with Rose de Winton, whom it was her life's chief concern to discover.

And again, how strangely she spoke! What had Rose de Winton's age to do with Ruth Templeton? Mrs. de Winton linked them together as though there was some connection with the two. Was this indeed some friend of her mother's girlhood? Impossible, and yet how strange!

While she stood silent pondering over these things Rosalie watched her furtively. But she mistook Ruth's delay for indecision of character, and thought to press home her request by other means. She adopted a wheedling tone.

"You know I can look after this search for Rose far better than you can," she said at length. "I'm on the spot, and I know how to deal with the police; while as for you,"—she broke off—"I don't see that you can do it at all! I shouldn't be a bit surprised if you weren't allowed to breathe a word about it to a blessed soul, excepting that Miss Holden. Come now—are you?"

Ruth reddened. "No," she replied. The monosyllable

dropped from her painfully. How could Mrs. de Winton have guessed that? She wondered more than ever.

"Of course you aren't!" returned Rosalie, becoming almost good-humored at the success of her chance shot. "It isn't likely you would be. Now you listen, my dear. You be guided by me and give me that money. If I find Rose it will all go to her good—and that is what your mother wanted—and if I don't find her, well, everything will have been done that can be done. It seems an extraordinary thing that Lady Templeton didn't leave any money to my Rose," continued Mrs. de Winton, after a moment's deliberation, "for she had a claim on her if anyone had."

Ruth listened to the last part of Rosalie's sentence with a growing fear. What did it all mean? She stood as one paralyzed. She could almost hear her mother's voice—"this trust is a sacred one. This girl has a claim upon me. This girl has a claim upon me."

"What do you mean by saying that your daughter had a claim upon Lady Templeton?" she asked, terrified at her own question. An inscrutable smile spread itself upon Mrs. de Winton's face.

"Do you think—that she would have wished you to ask that question?"

Ruth stopped short, speechless at the woman's retort. It was conclusive. Her mother would *not* have wished her to ask that question. Her whole manner in dealing with the affair had been one of reserve, and reserve so marked that it was almost secrecy. No one but Monica Holden was to be told of the girl's existence. Ruth herself was never to meet her, although she had to accept the responsibility for her well-being. How did this woman, towards whom she had begun to feel a repugnance that amounted almost to loathing, know or guess these strange conditions? How had she learned her mother's mind in this mysterious way? As Ruth tried to unravel the mystery, she became confused, and once more, as in Cornwall, that strange sense of touching the brink of the Unknown possessed her. She felt cold undercurrents that flowed beneath the surface facts—things latent, occult, secret.

Once before in a dream at Trevean, the night before her interview with Rose, and now for the second time, but in open daylight, this indescribable terror made itself felt.

She remained silent, and Rosalie sat looking at her, silent too, while that faint smile lurked about her mouth. Of what did that smile remind Ruth? Again the dream was wrapped about her, the dream, and the Thing that watched—watched always, silent, smiling. She put out her hands as though to dispel the shadows that had thus gained upon her, and Rosalie, matter of fact as usual, mistaking the gesture for one of defeat, determined at last to bring matters to a crisis. It was time for her to settle something definite and time also for her to be going. She was uncomfortable at Templeton; there was a chance of her encountering Sir Raymond, who, in spite of the lapse of years, would be sure to recognize her, and this, even allowing for her strong position, would place her annual payment in jeopardy. It had required immediate monetary pressure to enable her to brave such a catastrophe in the first instance, and now Elizabeth's death had added a further complication to the position. It was, indeed, time for her to go, but she did not mean to go empty.

"Look here, Miss Templeton," she said abruptly, "the best thing that you can do is to ask no questions, but to write me a check for Rose at once—or else give me a promise that you will get the money from Sir Raymond during the day. If you ask questions, I shall tell you the truth, and then you'll be sorry. You will have to give me the money then whether you like it or not. But I tell you this, if any money has been left for Rose, I'm the proper person to have it. Who else could have it, I should like to know, but the girl's own mother? And if there isn't any money left for her—well, then that was a mistake, for Lady Templeton intended that there should be, and you know that—I can see by your manner that you know it—as well as I. So if you defraud my lost child of this money, you'll have an uneasy conscience, and that I tell you. You won't be able to disobey your dead mother so easily!"

Rosalie paused, out of breath and delighted with her elo-

quence, but Lady Templeton's name used in such a connection and upon such lips had the effect of dispelling the cloud that had fallen upon Ruth.

"I will not give you this money, Mrs. de Winton," she said slowly, and she found that she needed all her strength to say it. She stood with her hands tightly clasped, as though to steady herself, and her eyes full upon her opponent. "We need detain each other no longer. Good-morning!"

At the impact of this refusal, the old fury descended upon Rosalie, and whipped her to the mood now that she had been in when Sir Raymond rescued the baby Rose from her violence, or when, only a few months ago, she had sent her from her doors to find shelter in the streets. She turned to Ruth, full of savage recklessness.

"You will give me that money, my girl; it will be the worse for you and for those belonging to you if you don't. Do you suppose that I'd have come down here without a good chance of getting it? What do you take me for? I'm no fool! I'm only a woman driven to desperation by the bad treatment of the world. You asked me a minute ago what claim I had upon your mother. My claim was strong enough to make her provide in some way for Rose when she had gone. And you weren't to know what that claim was. Well, you'll know pretty soon, now, and knowing or not knowing, you'll get that money somehow and hand it over. Then that's all. I can't talk soft-sawder any longer. I'm a plain, outspoken woman, and when I think of people living in the way you live here, and yet grudging a trifle to your poor relations, I'm——"

"Relations!" Infinite horror sounded in Ruth's voice, and then an unconsidered relief. "Oh, you must be mad!"

"Am I mad!" Rosalie's face was flushed to a dull red; her throat and lips worked convulsively. "You just——"

But Ruth did not wait to hear any more. The matter, it seemed, had passed beyond her; she could contend no longer with this strange woman, who looked and spoke like one possessed. Suddenly she bethought her of Robert. He would be near by, just outside the library window. She passed to the door and opened it quickly.

"Robert, Robert," she called under her breath. "Come at once! I want you!"

But there was no answer. Robert Trelling had gone; the seat was empty. For some reason or another, he had left it to go into the house. Only a burnt-out match and a cigarette end bore witness to his having been there, and Ruth felt a wild sense of desertion.

In a flash Rosalie had darted to her own view of the situation. "So there was someone listening, was there!" she cried with mordant scorn. "You were afraid to face the strange woman who wouldn't give a name, were you? You'll be more afraid yet. You fool! You silly fool! This girl Rose de Winton, my daughter, is your sister—your half-sister by the ties of blood, and your mother knew it. Your sister, do you hear—your father's daughter—and mine. What do you make of that? Your father loved me. I was before your mother, her fine ladyship, and many another was before her too, or I'm mistaken. *Now* will you give me that money? If you don't, every man and woman in this house, and every Jack and Jill in this village shall know the truth, or my name's not Rosalie de Winton!"

But Ruth was silent. The mystery was unveiled at last. Truth stood before her eyes, naked and most horrible. Then with all the force of her being, with all the power of will and heart and mind she nerved herself to defy it—to deny the foul thing.

"I do not believe you," she said quietly, facing Rosalie de Winton. Her cheeks were bloodless, and sweat had made the hair upon her forehead damp. "You may say what you like and to whom you like. My father is an honorable gentleman. I do not believe you."

Yet even as she spoke the vision of her mother, tearful and passionate, rose up before her; again she could hear her words—"You must find this girl and help her—but nobody must know—nobody—must—know! She has a claim upon me!" Ruth shut her eyes and her ears, she would see no visions now and listen to the sound of no remembered words.

All her strength was wanted to refute this lie. "I do not believe you," she said again, smiling in a delicate scorn.

The smile rather than the words added the last touch of frenzy to Mrs. de Winton's madness; violent abuse rose to her lips. As she spoke she gathered up her handbag and handkerchief and talking all the time made towards the door by which she had entered from the hall. But just as she touched the handle it was opened from the outside.

Sir Raymond Templeton stood in the doorway full of injured dignity. But he looked past her at his daughter.

"What is this, Ruth?" he asked testily. "Robert has fetched me—says I'm wanted instantly—an unseemly altercation proceeding in this——" Then his eye caught the visitor's. Mrs. de Winton stood checked in mid-career, but she was the first to recover herself.

"Well I never!" she exclaimed as soon as she had regained her breath. "I shouldn't have known you, Raymond, if I'd met you out of doors! I'm blest if I should! To think of you aging like that! Your eyebrows are quite white and you used to have such a nice dark fringe of eye-lashes. Well, well, it's twenty years!"

She dropped suddenly into a chair, still staring at the Baronet. His unexpected appearance, although she had contemplated meeting him, had entirely diverted her anger. The deep undercurrent of Rosalie's mind set steadily towards cash, but her surface passions were gusty and variable. She sat now a figure of genuine and interested surprise.

But to Sir Raymond, the effect of the elegant apparition of Rosalie de Winton was of much more disastrous consequence. The Baronet collapsed; he shrank; his face grew ashen and his eyes furtive. He looked from Ruth to Rosalie and back again to Ruth. Then he laughed nervously. The grand manner had vanished; the Templeton self-control had lost its balance.

"Well," he said at last in a weak high voice. "What's all this? Who is this? What?"

No one replied. He looked round once more. "What?"

he said again, sticking out his lips nervously and sucking them in.

Suddenly Rosalie laughed, and at the sound Sir Raymond flinched, putting up his hand as though to ward off a blow. Bereft of the Templeton complacency, the poor gentleman was abject.

Then Mrs. de Winton spoke. "It won't wash, Raymond!" she said brutally. "You know me well enough. Your wife knew me, and your wife knew my story. Your daughter there knows it, or a part of it, and I tell you this, that if you don't help me now, and help my girl Rose to keep body and soul together, there's not a living creature in London, or out of London, that won't know it!"

"There, that will do, Rosalie." Sir Raymond spoke in a low voice. "There is no need to make a scene. I did not—Lady Templeton—my God——" He stopped short and buried his face in his hands. Then he looked up. "Go now," he said quickly. "Go, there's a good woman." He broke off again at a loss for words.

Ruth, tall and pale, had looked on all this time silently. The Baronet had cast several nervous glances at her, and at last fluttered to her side. "This is an old friend, Ruth," he said insinuatingly; his nervous laugh followed the words. "Your mother knew her too. I help her sometimes." Receiving no answer from the girl, who stood as though she had not heard his words, Sir Raymond turned to Rosalie. "If you will leave us now, Mrs. de Winton," he remarked again, weakly jocular, "I'll see what can be done. Upon my word," he added, "I hardly knew you. Although time has made my eyebrows white, it has left you much the same—very much the same." He had recovered himself somewhat, his words steadied him, he felt better able to deal with the situation. "Well, well," he continued. "No one ever came to Templeton in vain. I'll see what can be done."

"Well the truth is, I'm rather stony," replied Rosalie, sulky, but somewhat mollified; "I've had bad losses lately, and now Rose has gone off skylarking somewhere——"

"Yes, yes," returned the Baronet hastily, "quite so, quite

so! But you shouldn't have come down here, frightening my little girl like this. You're very violent, you know, Rosalie, and she isn't accustomed to that sort of thing. Now, I don't suppose she knows about half her mother's little charities——"

"Charities!" Up leapt the soul of Rosalie to battle; that word had challenged it. So valiantly did it shine in her blue eyes that it drew from Sir Raymond a hasty question.

"How much?"

The fair lips were also parted: "Skunk" was the word that trembled on them, but the propitiatory question changed that suddenly to "Two hundred pounds."

"Two hundred pounds," repeated Sir Raymond meditatively; "two hundred pounds." He made it appear that this was the sum he usually disbursed to the orphan and the widow. "Two hundred pounds."

He unlocked a drawer and took out a check book. Then for the first time Ruth spoke.

"Father," she said in a whisper. "Don't write that check. This woman is a liar—an impostor. Before you came in just now she did her best to frighten me into giving her that money. She threatened all sorts of things. She lied to me—lied to me most horribly. I cannot tell you what she said—I would not dare to tell you—but I do know this—she is not a fit person to be helped."

Rosalie listened to this indictment, smiling maliciously. When Ruth had finished there was no other sound than Sir Raymond's pen scratching over the paper. When the check was written he handed it to Mrs. de Winton, who read it through carefully and then opened her small chain-bag and dropped it in. Sir Raymond now had a moment for his daughter.

"What did you say, my dear?" he asked absently rubbing his eyeglasses. "Did you speak to me? I never can give my attention to more than one thing at a time. You needn't repeat it, though. I don't suppose it was of much consequence, eh? Never mind," he added quickly, for he had just realized that Rosalie was buttoning her gloves. "Mrs. de Winton is

going. I can give you a few minutes for a little talk when I have said good-by to her."

Mrs. de Winton, having buttoned her gloves, looked up and smiled affably, although in her heart of hearts she bitterly regretted not having, while she was about it, asked for a larger sum.

"Good-by, Ruth," she said; and smiled still more, for she had caught the name on Sir Raymond's lips and enjoyed using it. "I shan't bother you now, though it's small thanks to you that I got this money for my poor child. I wonder what your mother would have said if she could have seen the wicked way in which you stood up to me this morning. You look after that girl of yours, Raymond," (by this time she was rustling down the library) "she takes too much upon herself—Oh, yes, don't you bother, I'm going back to town right enough, and you won't hear another sound of me, not for a week of Christmases at least, so don't you let that old fool Barnes write me a long jaw about keeping to my contract, and all that. I was hard pressed or I'd have kept out of your way. Still, you couldn't have done anything if I'd chosen to make a row—not with the evidence I've got. But I didn't choose—I know how to behave if I want to—and there's no harm done. There's a lot of good done, in fact, for I've taken that daughter of yours down a peg. She's too uppish and she's got a temper that's simply shocking—a silent temper, that's what it is, and a silent temper's always the worst. Now I say a thing and I've done with it. I'm as keen as mustard, you know, when I'm roused. I've said that to you before, and it's true, but—well—when it's over it's over!"

Still talking, Mrs. de Winton passed out into the hall; within sight of the front door she paused, looking about her at the paneled walls and the portraits of past Templetons. Involuntarily Sir Raymond glanced at the footman who was in waiting, but the man's face wore the usual impenetrable mask. Mrs. de Winton appeared to be both pleased and impressed by her surroundings.

"Good-by, Raymond," she said with a little nod of approbation; "I'm very glad to have come and seen you, and it's a

nice house—very. I like all this too,” her glance swept over the walls, “it all looks *good*, you know. Bye-bye.” With another smile and a little gracious bow, Rosalie de Winton stepped out into the spring sunshine and left Sir Raymond standing with bent head by the door.

Nothing but the disgraceful sense of holding it dishonorably would have induced Robert Trelling to desert his post outside the library window, even though it were but to go in search of another protector for Ruth—her own father. And indeed during the first part of the interview he had held tight hands upon himself to prevent his rushing in to help her against her detestable visitor. But the secret that he had accidentally discovered restrained him, and he thought it possible that in her pride, Ruth would rather face Mrs. de Winton’s disclosures alone or until Sir Raymond took the responsibility of decision upon himself. He had lost no time in finding her protection. Sir Raymond had been both surprised and indignant at the hasty way in which he had been dragged from his pleasant morning paper, and shot, against his will, into the library.

But now that Rosalie had gone (he had watched her with sails spread moving down the avenue) Robert found himself more furious with Sir Raymond and more in love with his daughter than he had ever been before.

At the end of half an hour he returned to the library to look for Ruth. He did not know how far she had realized the significance of what had happened. He dreaded her mood. Every imaginable danger that could touch her rose before him until he cursed himself for a fool in having delayed his love-making for so long. He was positive—or almost positive—now that she cared for him, and he intended to say what he had to say at once before he left for Paris. He could bear the uncertainty no longer.

Ruth was still in the library. She was lying on a sofa at the far end. Her hat and furs that she had worn so jauntily for her morning walk were on the ground beside her. She did not stir when Trelling came near, until at last he put his hand upon her shoulder and forced her to look up. When she did

so he saw that, although she was not weeping, her face was extraordinarily tired. When she saw him, she lifted herself into a sitting posture and remained still with her head bent and her hands before her; all the elasticity had left her figure.

"My dear," Trelling could think of nothing else to say.

At last she spoke.

"I'm thankful you heard. I should have wanted you to know, but I could never have told you."

"It is true, then?"

She pressed her hands to her face. "Oh, yes, yes—I couldn't think that it was, until he proved it by signing that check. And afterwards—I threatened to go and find the woman—and—he told me. Oh, Robert"—she stretched her arms drearily—"I am so sick of living. There is so much that I don't understand—so much that is too horrible to think of. And I am sick, too, of the difficulty of living. I am not good enough to bear it all. I can't forgive. Some things seem to me to be beyond forgiveness. I wish it would all stop. Think—just some little accident or illness, a fall from one's horse, a chill, a fever, and it would all be over for ever, as it is over for mother. I know it is dreadful to talk like this," she smiled faintly, "but somehow I have lost my hold on things."

"Your mother would never have said that, Ruth."

"Mother! No! But perhaps she had lived long enough to be better able to face it. Perhaps when mother did not understand, she felt as I am feeling now. But, Robert"—Ruth caught at Trelling's hand, scarcely knowing what she did, but the touch went through him to the heart—"Robert, mother knew what I have heard to-day, and it was that knowledge that killed her. That was the shock you asked me about. I am sure of it. And—and—I have that, too, to bear—that to forgive—my father." For a moment there was silence and then it seemed that Ruth talked in another and a more absent mood. "Mother," she said thoughtfully, "dear heart—she was not a coward as I am; she did not die from want of courage. I don't pity her—not *her*—oh, God!"

Her head sank down upon her folded arms, and Trelling, standing by, felt words impossible to him. He guessed dimly

what was in her mind. After another silence, she raised herself. "I have never had to forgive anybody before, Robert. I have never been tempted before to judge the actions of any human being. One day—it was just before she told me to be kind to Rose—she sat and talked for ever so long. 'Never judge,' she said; 'you cannot know the facts of people's lives, you cannot understand their natures, and it is only in knowing everything that you can come to a conclusion.' She was always so scornful when I talked of justice. 'And how are we, in our individual lives, to deal out justice, little Ruth—we poor human creatures? Our justice is injustice.' Oh, I remember so well—I had just read a part of the Electra to her, the dreadful part where Electra sits with the sword drawn across her knees waiting to kill Clytemnestra. 'That was justice, my dear,' she said, 'the ideal of a youthful world. And the Gods upheld it, while, at the same time, they condemned the brother and sister for working out a just penalty. There was no solution to the problem then. But we have outstripped justice—in principle at least. That is the essence of Christianity.' She often talked like that. Sometimes it seemed as though she had forgotten I was there. But I questioned her then and she put it in another way. 'When self is conquered, little Ruth,' she said, 'we no longer want to have our wrongs avenged, because we have found our compensation in our happiness—we have begun to understand why it all happened. We see the blindness of the world—the tears, the sin, the agony, and, just because of our own pain we know that it is all right, and that life is only to be got that way.' Aunt Monica came into the room while she was talking. I don't think she quite agreed—at least not in everything. But she looked at mother critically, with a kind of half-humorous wonder. You know her look. Afterwards she showed me something she had written in her notebook. I wonder if I can remember it—it was something like this.

"Hope where there is no hope and your hope will be fulfilled. Have faith when faith is proved to be impossible and your faith will be justified. Live in a Fool's Paradise and it will become a real one."

Her voice died away, and still Robert did not speak. He only drew a chair to the side of the sofa and sat down. He was thinking. It was unlike Ruth to have said so much. The words, too, were Elizabeth's words, but they were not Ruth's. He had never before seen her like this; she was evidently under the stress of some strong emotion.

"Why are you talking like this?" The obvious question dropped from him at last.

"Because—I am talking against myself. I am full of the blackness of hate. I am trying to forgive—and—oh, God, forgive me—I can't! These things were true to mother, but for to-day at least, they are not true to me. I cannot think of mercy. I can only think of two broken lives—my mother's and Rose de Winton's."

"Your mother's!" cried Trelling in amazement. "How can you call her life a broken one? It was glorious, triumphant!"

Ruth paused thinking. "Yes," she said, "it was triumphant in spite of everything."

"And the other life——"

"Ah, that at least is broken!"

"How do you know? In spite of everything that life might be triumphant too."

When Ruth again turned her head, Trelling saw that there were tears on her eyelashes.

"Pray," she said in a whisper, "pray that what you have said may come to pass. And, oh, God, if I have any power in me to help it on, it will come to pass."

Once more she put out her hand. He took it, and held it reverently clasped between his own.

"Robert," she said, "I can't forgive yet—I must wait—a little. Will you help me to find Rose? She is lost. She is the girl I told you of last night. She is my half-sister—my father's child. *That* was my mother's secret, and now it is mine."

He bent over her hand. "I knew," he said, "from what I heard to-day."

"You will help me to find her?"

"I will help you—so help me God!"

An hour later, when Ruth had gone to her room, Robert walked once more up and down the terrace. All was as it had been in the morning: the birds sang, the scent of the balsam poplar was in his nostrils. But all was changed—blackened, blighted, dead. The soul of it was lost.

Before Ruth had left the library, even while her hand was still in his, the flood of his life and his desire had burst the bounds he set upon it, and forgetting all that happened during the morning, scarcely aware of his own words, he had asked her to be his wife. His passion was ill-timed. She shrank away from him.

"I cannot think of marriage, Robert," she said wearily. "I have nothing to give you but friendship. The thought of love has been made hateful to me. My father it seems once loved—that woman!" She continued with difficulty, "I can't help it. Forgive me. I am unstrung. I don't know what I'm saying. It—it wasn't like this yesterday. I could have loved you then, but to-day has spoilt it all. I didn't know. To-day I have learnt too much, more even than the last few months have taught me. I have learnt that I don't understand these things. Ah, forgive me—forgive me—I have hurt you!"

His face was white and his mouth set doggedly; he drew his breath through his teeth. He had put his fate to the test and had lost everything and the first moment of that knowledge was agony. But he did not flinch.

She saw something of the working of his soul and—"Ah, forgive me!" she cried again. "I can't help it—I can't help it—I shall never marry."

Then she had rushed out of the room in a sudden storm of tears which even the great shock that she had just experienced had failed to draw from her, and Trelling had gone out on to the terrace knowing that he had not helped, but had added to her pain, and that thought now seemed to bring with it the greatest pain of all.

Up and down he had walked, up and down—past the Solomon's Seal and the anemones with their black centers. He looked out over the river to the green-veiled poplars bending

gently in the wind. A man and two boys were fishing on the opposite bank. While he watched there was a cry of joy for the boys and a small fish flickered in the sunshine.

"Lucky little beggar!" exclaimed Trelling suddenly. Then he looked at his watch: it was time to pack his portmanteau for his journey.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

"If you trap the moment before it is ripe,
The tears of repentance you'll certainly wipe,
But if once you let the ripe moments go,
You can never wipe off the tears of woe."

HERRICK

"If little labor, little are our gains,
Man's fortunes are according to his pains."

HERRICK

A CRISIS had been arrived at in the history of Templeton, and in proportion as it had affected them, it wrought a difference in the lives of three people. Neither Sir Raymond, Ruth Templeton, nor Robert Trelling would ever be quite the same as before the coming of Rosalie de Winton, Sir Raymond visibly had altered the most—whether the knowledge that his white eyebrows had become, if not remarkable, at least apparent, or whether the momentary shattering of the Templeton complacency had worked upon him, it is difficult to say—but whatever the cause, Sir Raymond had aged and aged suddenly.

Mrs. Whitter noticed the change and it annoyed her. She found him increasingly silent and blind to her pleasing efforts; he was not so facile now in compliments, or so grateful—in charming language—for her companionship. He had begun to accept her presence at Templeton as a matter of course, to gloom in her society, and to recall more often than under the circumstances was decent, the virtues of his late wife.

So for the first time the little lady began to despair, but she conquered her feelings—like the brave little woman she was—and turning a bright face upon the future, refused to be daunted.

The truth was that Sir Raymond had been much annoyed by the fact of Elizabeth's secret knowledge of his relations

with Rosalie de Winton. It revealed her character to him under a new aspect; her strength and her amazing charity touched him. He felt as much ashamed of himself as was consistent with his dignity as a Templeton. "She was a good woman," he said to himself. "In some things—in some things—I was hardly worthy of her."

However, his humility, once clearly defined, became his pride, and Mrs. Whitter suffered from the recital of Elizabeth's merits and his own self-abasement. What had happened? This attitude was unlike Sir Raymond. Mrs. Whitter hinted it was unworthy of a Templeton, whereupon the Baronet, with his eyes flashing, told her that pride was the sin whereby angels fell, and that from those to whom much was given, much would be expected—even humility.

Mrs. Whitter, knowing that silence in such circumstances is golden, only smiled and made no comment.

But none the less she was disappointed. Ruth had gone to Cornwall to stay with Monica Holden, and Hugh had written to say that circumstances over which he had no control must delay his visit to Templeton for a couple of weeks at least. So Mrs. Whitter, who, in defiance of convention, had remained there to cheer the disconsolate widower, reigned alone. The only hindrance to her happiness was the Baronet himself.

Day after day passed and Pansy flitted about the empty house, filling it with well-tempered gayety. But although in collaboration with Monsieur Papillon she achieved dinners that were masterpieces of invention, although she attired herself in a manner that was at once seductive and yet restrained, Sir Raymond had somehow become oblivious to her presence.

Her failure pricked her pride; she meditated departure.

Hugh Templeton's coming, however, put a new complexion on things. Sir Raymond roused himself to conversation, to discussion, even to argument with his nephew, and for a time seemed to have shaken off the apathy into which he had fallen. He even ventured, with some trace of his former sprightliness, to eulogize, in choice phrases, Mrs. Whitter, but she, knowing now how little his compliments were worth, accepted them

with resignation rather than hope. Still, her endeavors to accomplish her end, and elicit from Sir Raymond the final homage that a man can render to a woman, had been stupendous, and now, as she retired from the contest weary and beaten, the weapons of warfare still about her, she drew without knowing it and by virtue of those same weapons, a still greater admiration from his nephew. Had she been aware of this, it would have done much to mitigate her disappointment—it might even have turned her thoughts in another direction. But it wasn't until the close of Hugh Templeton's visit that her minor triumph was made manifest.

One evening, her cigarette consumed, she left the two men sitting over their wine in the dining room. Their eyes followed her to the door and as it closed it seemed to both as though something exquisite and fragrant had been withdrawn. Silence fell upon them, and Hugh Templeton, looking up suddenly, caught in Sir Raymond's eye a lingering expression of proud proprietorship. The Baronet's demeanor startled him; he grew distracted by a horrid surmise. Suppose—oh, preposterous!—yet Pansy was not an old woman, and, in the event of her marriage with the Baronet, Sir Raymond's hope of a son might not, a second time, be daunted.

And then—but the heir-presumptive refused to admit the thought.

It requires genius to comprehend a situation in its entirety—the end in the beginning; clever common sense adds merely one to one.

The genius of Hugh Templeton saw that not a moment must be lost. The thought was as wine to him. In a flash he knew his mind. Once more the sport he most delighted in was his.

During the next few minutes in the drawing room he looked at Pansy with exultant eyes. Her white shoulders swam up from billowy black, a black aigrette floated above her yellow hair, for the rest she gleamed, white and pink and golden a woman beautiful and—aware. Her obvious knowledge was an added charm. Were there no reason of paramount importance, Pansy was sufficient in herself, so thought Hugh Templeton

at that moment, to justify the game. He had had enough of the unsophisticated maiden; he decided that such fruit was not for his picking.

As his thought progressed, he let his eyes rest upon her in an informing glance. Pansy knew the expression well; she had seen it before bestowed on others. His whole figure indicated the conquering hero; she had seen that too. She flashed him back the answer he had hoped for, then dropped her eyelids and with a curious inward smile, bade him good-night—demurely.

After she had gone he hesitated for a fraction of a second, and then, under a pretext of fetching a book he had promised to lend to Sir Raymond, left the room by another door. He sped down the long corridor, coming at length to the staircase that led to the wing where Pansy's room was situated. But he was too late. She had already reached the gallery just above him.

"Tom," he called, under his breath, "for God's sake wait a minute, I—I want to speak to you! I have something to say."

Mrs. Whitter leant for a moment over the balustrade, and then with a little musical laugh, sped on. The last he saw of her was a cloud of black that floated into her bedroom as the door shut inexorably, and the key turned in the lock.

The little episode restored Pansy's self-respect. It healed her injured vanity. After it she felt better able to face the world and the recalcitrant Sir Raymond. But she was hardly prepared for the swift progression of the events which followed.

Next morning she dressed herself even more carefully than was her wont; and as she pulled the brush through her hair, the little inward smile about her mouth deepened. Only for one moment, at some retrogression of ideas, did it disappear. "The pity of it!" she said below her breath. Then, as though arriving at the conclusion of the whole matter, "Well, anyhow, a living dog is better than a dead lion!" she added emphatically.

Hugh Templeton spent no time in dawdling. He used all his

skill. The result was what might have been expected, once more the hero conquered.

Pansy walked in to lunch in a gentle flutter of excitement—the flutter of the engaged woman. Hugh was delighted with his expedition. He had been feeling sore. His conceit also had received a blow, first from Ruth's reception of his letter, and then from her subsequent disappearance into Cornwall, in order to avoid him. They were neither of them pleasant subjects for contemplation. But now his soul was healed; Mrs. Whitter stroked it and he grew complacent through a full-fed, though fastidious, vanity, of which he was only half aware. Mrs. Whitter was aware of it—and not displeased, it testified to her talents, in that it responded to her will as readily as the deeper passion. She was now on the brink of middle age, nearly, if not quite, bereft of the weapons of youth and beauty, but formidable in the duel of sex, in that she had discovered the vulnerable spot of her opponent—Man, and could therefore aim straight at the heel of his vanity. Such discoveries are to women the compensations of advancing years.

Lunch concluded, Hugh waited for his Pansy in an alcove leading from the hall, where cushioned settles made a nook around a blazing fire.

"Thank God, there's nothing sentimental about you, Tom!" he exclaimed when he saw her. The thought had been working in his mind. "From the sentimental view of life, good Lord, deliver us!"

"A lover's litany," laughed Pansy. "Let me finish it. From all romance and rhapsodies and rhodomontade, from all tears, promises and——"

"Spiritual perfections," added Hugh grimly, "good Lord, deliver us! That is—from the sentimental view. The devil is nothing but a sentimentalist, my dear Tom, saved from the dreariness of heaven by sense of humor."

Pansy settled herself down among the cushions and stroked his hand with an air of possession. "This is all very well," she pouted, "but I am as great an egoist as you are, and I want to hear something nice about myself—something that I am, not what I'm not."

Sir Raymond's mantle had fallen upon his nephew; well-fed, well-groomed, undisturbed by scruples, Hugh would, when the time came, be a worthy successor of the great man. He was now more than equal to the occasion.

Pansy resumed her interrupted smile. "You had better not let Ruth hear!"

Ruth! Alas, her subtle instinct was at fault. Pansy had made a mistake. To her dismay Templeton turned from her frowning.

Her remonstrance was brisk, and it roused him; but, having made her protest, she fell suddenly into a profound meditation.

"Of course she will never come to Templeton afterwards," she said, "when——"

His laughter spoiled her sentence. "Have you looked as far ahead as that since luncheon, my treasure?" he asked blandly, "or was it——"

A door shut suddenly. Sir Raymond's heels were heard tripping across the hall and, in an instant, Pansy was on her feet.

"I want to tell Sir Raymond about it," she said breathlessly, "will you let me, Hugh? I could break it more easily than you could. He—he has been very good to me."

"By Jove, he has!" thought Hugh. "He'd have been gooder still if I hadn't put a spoke in his wheel."

"Go at once, Heart of my Soul," said he aloud, while his eyes shone with satisfaction. "As a matter of fact, though, I ought to be the one to break the joyful news by rights, oughtn't I?"

But Pansy thought not. She knew she could manage the Baronet, but she was rather afraid of the consequences of her communication.

Hugh fell in with her mood. After all it was a small matter, and she might do as she liked. So charmingly did he kiss her a brief good-by, that Pansy was more in love than she ever expected to be. But at the same time her heart sighed. The unspoken words of the morning rose to her lips. "The pity of it! The pity of it!" Could Hugh Templeton have

heard them, he might have insisted on undertaking the painful duty himself.

Mrs. Whitter found Sir Raymond rolling up his throat in a comforter, preparatory to taking a constitutional in the garden. The sun was warm, but the spring-winds were still treacherous, and Rosalie de Winton had insisted so forcibly on the fact of his advancing years that the delicate gentleman grew even more careful of himself than before.

Slipping behind a curtain, Pansy peeped out at him.

"Will you take your poor little lonely guest with you," she asked playfully. "She won't be here for so *very* much longer you know!"

Sir Raymond was charmed. He implored her company, but questioned her implication. What did she mean? He had hoped she might have looked upon Templeton as her home—for a few more weeks, at least.

"And Ruth? Does she hope so too?" Pansy questioned him archly, but paid no attention to his reply. The birds interested her, the blossoming trees, the progress of the carefully arranged Dutch bulbs. It was not until their walk was nearly over that she returned to the subject of her departure. This meant more than Sir Raymond had foreseen.

Sir Raymond was stunned by the news—literally paralyzed. He sat motionless gazing in front of him.

Before he could find his voice, she had asked him, with a touch of delicious malice, for congratulations.

That roused the Templeton anger. Sir Raymond sprang to his feet, and walked rapidly up and down. His eyes flashed, and the twitching of his lips was not to be controlled.

Pansy laughed inwardly from pure joy. Her sense of justice was appeased; her sense of humor more than satisfied.

Up and down went Sir Raymond like a caged hyena; in his anger he had unconsciously exchanged his patter for a stride. He did not proceed to discuss irrelevances or suggest a return to the house, as Mrs. Whitter had hoped that he might do, or perhaps feared—she did not know which; the flame of his rage was such that it desired not extinction, but fuel to feed on. At last it died as suddenly as it had sprung

to life. Conquered by emotion, he sat down on the tree trunk, and buried his face in his hands. But his white eyebrows were visible above his fingers.

"Sir Raymond—dear Sir Raymond," pleaded Pansy, "how could I know that it would hurt you like this?"

"The shattering of a dream," murmured the Baronet, "the bursting of a bubble, the—the——" Further similes failed him.

"But you gave me no idea—you never told me that you would feel it so much. How could I know?"

"I hardly knew myself. When you were near me I was conscious only of vague dissatisfaction with the existing state of things—that was all. I did not pause to consider—and yet there was something—

" 'Blueness abundant
Summer redundant
Where is the blot?' "

Pansy did not reply. She did not recognize the quotation and could think of nothing to say. Sir Raymond's face was still covered by his hands. He spoke but she could not catch the words. At last she made out "weakness," "justification," "strong man's tears."

The Baronet sobbed.

Pansy strangled a wild desire to laugh aloud. He was absurd. The whole thing would have been absurd if it had not been so intensely delightful to her. With all her five senses, she realized her triumph.

"Dear Raymond," she said at last, "you are so sensitive, so highly strung. You have the poetic temperament in a superlative degree. I shall never forget this moment."

She paused. The turn of events puzzled her. "Perhaps—perhaps—after all! She would wait and see. If Sir Raymond really wanted her, it was not—even now—too late."

"Do you love this nephew of mine?" he said, after a moment.

Pansy did not reply.

"Of course it is very natural that you should," he continued

bitterly, "good-looking"—he tasted the acrid words upon his tongue—"young. Young! ah, the sting of it!"

"Oh," Pansy put out a deprecating hand, "Raymond, I can't bear it. I can't——" Sobs stopped her words. Pocket handkerchiefs flourished, she also wept.

The Baronet was the first to recover. Where was the triumphant smiling woman who had announced to him her engagement? He grew alert. Leaning across the tree trunk he studied her attentively. Her grief was tumultuous. As he watched it, it struck him that she might not be so utterly lost to him as he had supposed. The thought gave him pause, it calmed the wildness of his sorrow, it set free the Templeton caution. He was not quite so sure now if he wanted Pansy for better or for worse after all. Then he thought of his nephew—that good-for-nothing ungrateful rascal Hugh. How had he repaid the bounty flung to him? First of all he had involved his daughter in a disreputable affair, and then he had stolen his—his—what was Pansy to him at the present moment? He did not know. He was not sure if he wanted her to be anything to him, but he was quite sure that he did not want her to be anything to anybody else, last of all Hugh. Of late years the passion he had felt for her was too transcendental even to be described as *l'amitié amoureuse*, even to speak of it at all, thought the Baronet with a sigh, was to brush the golden dust from the wings of his fair Psyche.

In this he deceived himself, but he smiled, for the simile pleased him. A sudden sob from Mrs. Whitter brought him back to sordid earth—a sob and a word, one word—"Hugh."

It was enough. Hugh indeed! Jealousy is a crude emotion, but it was raging jealousy that now tore afresh Sir Raymond's tattered heart. He did not even see Pansy, he saw instead his nephew's red lips, his smiling, insolent eyes. He saw him with Pansy in his arms laughing at the old man, the foolish pretentious old uncle with—Great God!—the white eyebrows! It was not to be borne.

"Damn him!" he said between his teeth. "Wait."

Then Sir Raymond got up. The Templeton spirit had been roused. His eyes glared. He stood straight and strong, re-

stored to a preternatural youth. From between her fingers Pansy thought that she had never seen him look so handsome.

With two strides he was at her side. With one whisk of the arm he had lifted the little woman off her feet, crumpling her to him until she lost her breath and could only feel his heart hammering against her own. She spluttered her remonstrances, but he took no notice of them. He did not hear her. He shut her mouth with furious kisses, pressing them upon her gasping throat and wet eyes, in a sudden fierce delight of possession. Passion thrilled him. He was on fire, first with jealousy, then with the touch of the woman he crushed between his arms. Of her as a person he never thought at all. He thought of Hugh and then of himself and of the triumphant ecstasy of his own emotion. He could feel the sting of the blood in his veins, he had become aware of his whole body. He had defied the years and laid hold of a forgotten past.

Disjointed phrases flashed through Pansy's brain. "Good gracious! He is perfectly magnificent! Who'd have thought it! Hugh is a child to him—a sucking infant! Mercy! I can't breathe. The man's killing me!" Aloud she protested, "Raymond, let me go! Oh! Oh! Yes—I love you!"

"You'll marry me? Me—Me—ME? No one else?"

"Yes! Yes! Let me go. For God's sake put me down."

"You'll marry me to-morrow? You'll meet me in town and marry me by special license? You'll tell Hugh your decision before my face?"

"Yes, yes, anything. Only as you love me, put me on the ground. I feel such a fool kicking in the air like this."

Sir Raymond let her go, stood upright and drew a deep breath. He still shook from the force of his passion. Who dared to twit him with his white eyebrow now? He glanced round fiercely at an imaginary audience.

Pansy sat on the tree sobbing real tears this time—tears of the most vital joy she had ever experienced. At last she had grasped the substance. The shadow could go to the devil. "Lady Templeton!" Delicious title! It was honey to her. She rolled it on her tongue and inhaled its fragrance. "Lady

Templeton"—that name would be hers at once. There was no waiting involved this time. No waiting. It was not expedient that anybody should die. Wonderful!

If only Elizabeth could see her now! For one moment Pansy wished that she believed in a future life. Could the spirit of Elizabeth have witnessed that little scene her cup had indeed been full.

Suddenly Sir Raymond pulled out his watch. "My dear," he said, with some agitation, "it is four o'clock, time for my drops. Strange to say, this little walk has quite fatigued me."

Inside the house, Hugh Templeton, smiling with his usual insouciance, sat and waited by the fire.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

But thou desirest to see the ground and background of all things. Thus thou art compelled to mount above thyself up, upwards, until thou seest below thyself.—*Zarathustra I.*: NIETZSCHE.

THE news of Sir Raymond's marriage came to Ruth at Trevean as a surprise, scarcely as a shock. The veil that Elizabeth had held so sedulously over the grosser aspects of life had been abruptly torn away, and the hideous truth found her unstayed by knowledge and unprepared by warning. Her faith had gone. There seemed now to be no reason for anything, no happiness in anything. If vice was hideous, virtue was barren. Her mother had lived in a Fool's Paradise, but was not any Paradise, she asked, the place of fools? She did not put her feeling into words, and for that reason sounded the more completely the depths of negation. It seemed as though in some strange way that she was bearing the load in its entirety—the load of another's sin. She said as much to Monica.

"A scapegoat!" exclaimed Monica. "You! Rose is the scapegoat, dying in the wilderness with the sins of at least three persons bound upon her forehead! You! My dear, you have no sense of proportion!"

Ruth bent her head, ashamed. But still the cloud did not lift. She gazed with dull eyes upon the open face of the sea, upon the spacious sweep of cliffs, and the infinitude of sky, but there was no longer any praise of God to be found among them. Their Benedicite was silent. They might have been the painted pieces of a theater.

She thought of Robert Trelling with a kind of wonder. When she looked back upon that last day in the library it seemed amazing that she could have been so deeply moved. She had been shaken to the heart's core, and now she wondered if she had ever had a heart at all. She could feel within

her an instrument that pumped blood through her arteries—that was all. Poetry had ceased to interest her, and to her present mood it appeared that all present-day novels dealt exclusively with the passion of love in an absurdly exaggerated form. Love between man and woman had become for her a thing soiled and spoilt. She believed it to be irretrievably mixed up with something else to which she could give no name—something, the horror of which she felt in her flesh rather than realized in her brain, something that might be symbolized, not so much by the grossness as by a certain evil suggestiveness, in Rosalie de Winton and inseparable from her. She felt it in the recoil of her own flesh, and yet what she felt was not in reality a fleshly thing at all, but an insidious corruption of the soul.

Monica watched her quietly and waited until the cloud should lift. In her own mind she likened the blackness that encompassed her dearly loved child to the obscurity of that dark wood in which Dürer's knight braved the ghastly forms of Death and Evil. She did not attempt to help her, but she kept her hand upon her in that difficult way, although Ruth was unaware of its gentle pressure. Nothing was said of the girl's future. Templeton was hardly mentioned between them, and indeed a Templeton with Mrs. Whitter in her mother's place was to Ruth a travesty too cynical to contemplate.

At last one day a letter arrived from Robert Trelling, coming like a stone flung into the midst of their stagnant heaviness. It merely stated certain facts. Some time ago a girl had run away from a penitentiary at Brentwood, had traveled from there to York and on to London, but after that had been lost sight of. This girl was Rose de Winton. Trelling had obtained this information from the police, and from one Miss Warriner, who had taken Rose into her shelter for friendless girls for one week, until she might send her to Brentwood. He had also interviewed the Sister Superior of Brentwood, but she could give no further information. She was disinclined to discuss the case, she regarded it as hopeless.

"I am afraid that Rose was one of our failures," she said sadly, folding her white hands.

Rose had gone to Brentwood under her own name, attempting no disguise, but now she had disappeared once more utterly and the police were baffled in their search for her.

"A penitentiary! Brentwood! The Sisters of the Holy Cross! Rose Gray—Rose de Winton!" Monica Holden listened incredulously. "Oh, poor child!" she exclaimed. "Poor Rose! She would never have borne two years of that discipline. Ruth, we must find her now! Whatever happens, we must find her now!"

"I want nothing better!" said Ruth drearily. "I have only you in the world, Aunt Monica. You and—Rose."

"And—Robert?"

Ruth shook her head, but the red mounted to her forehead.

Thus it happened that Ruth and Monica Holden came to London. They took rooms in a quiet street, and although when they arrived the season was at its height, not one person presumably had thought or asked of Ruth Templeton.

Sir Raymond and his bride were still at the Italian lakes, having flown before the breath of scandal, and after the first flare they also were forgotten. Templeton Manor was shut up; and the Templetons, as far as London was concerned, might never have existed at all.

One day Ruth sat by the open window of her first floor sitting room, and watched beyond the iron railings of the balcony the perpetual stream of every kind of vehicle as it passed beneath her. Her life weighed heavily upon her; something—another nature it seemed—was being born within her, and such a new birth meant an added strain. Her love for Trelling had risen anew out of the gray ashes of her present life. A letter from him lay upon her lap. She had felt it very often of late under her fingers, and at night it rested beneath her pillow. It was creased and worn from much reading; it had been wept over and prayed over; and yet it was not the letter of a lover, but merely the honest kindly letter of a friend. In its very kindness Ruth tasted the dregs of bitterness. She did not realize—how should she?—that the merest word would be sufficient to make Trelling for ever deaf to the sound of that last farewell spoken in the library at Tem-

pleton. Having acted honestly, according to her mood at the time, she believed she had spoken irrevocably, and the denial she now put upon her restored passion caused her almost as much agony of mind as the shameful revelations of that day. She was hardly conscious as yet of this dual nature, of the strength of that love which she imagined she had abjured for ever. Trelling wrote that her happiness was his first desire, and that being so, he was employing all his time in the search for Rose de Winton. He would not come to see Ruth until he could come with the news that the girl had been discovered. He did not want to trouble or to pain her. She would never again hear another word from him to cause her uneasiness. She must forget, he added, that he had ever said anything that might make friendship between them difficult.

At this point Ruth invariably stopped short in her reading. She did not know why those last sentences should hurt her so much. She did not know what she wanted, only that she was wretched. She came to the conclusion that he had never loved her at all, that the affection had been entirely on her side, and the grief with which he had accepted her rebuff was entirely a phantom of her own imagination. Monica found her petulant, and she for her part wearied even of the patience of her friend. So the days drifted by, differently complexioned from the Cornish days, and in their way almost more unbearable. This foolish misery arising from her own action (and yet she had only given voice to a true emotion that for the time had gripped her) had sterilized her life. It held no hope. She loathed the minutes as they passed.

This afternoon was no exception to the others. She turned now in her chair so that she might see the clock.

"Three!" she said under her breath. "An hour and a quarter to tea time! And afterwards—there is always afterwards!"

Once more she leant back and watched the steady stream of traffic. It was difficult to believe that people passing beneath her were more than a mere show, difficult to believe that they would continue to exist when they had once turned the corner into the square, and beyond the range of her eyes.

So absorbed was she in her dull speculation that she did

not hear the tinkle of the doorbell. The maid had announced a visitor before she had become aware of what had happened. She required all her fortitude to rise quietly and receive Robert Trelling. The blood left her cheeks; her limbs trembled; but her training saved her from the disgrace of discovery.

"How do you do?"

She held out her hand, but he did not take it. He was extraordinarily excited.

"Ruth," he exclaimed—looking straight at her and yet, it seemed to her, scarcely seeing her—"I have kept my word. Rose is found!"

"Rose is found! Rose is found!" The words sounded in Ruth's ears, but as Robert went on talking she realized that they had not come to her with the overwhelming joy she had anticipated. Her exclamation was conventional.

"How glad I am! How glad mother would have been!"

The tone underlying the words was cold. She did not yet realize what it all meant for Rose; her mind for the moment dwelt exclusively on the relations between Robert and herself. He, it seemed, had suffered none of the loneliness that had preyed upon her heart; but had been completely absorbed in the business of his search. Now he was delighted with his success to the exclusion of all regrets. Quick jealousy—not of a person, but of a mood that had in her imagination held him from her—chilled her. The thing was unreasonable, but she could sooner have stifled her very breath, for it was the outcome of a certain arrogance, held in check, yet still a part of Ruth's nature.

She repeated the words mechanically.

"How glad I am! I must go and fetch Aunt Monica to hear all about it!"

Robert felt the frigidity of her thanks. He had done the one thing she had asked of him—a difficult thing, an unpleasant thing; and now that it was done it seemed that he had failed to please her. He lifted a hand, half deprecating, half annoyed.

"The news was for you alone. May I not tell it to you—alone?"

She had already passed the door, but her ears were quick to catch his tone, and it fell comfortably on her hurt heart. She did not look back, but feeling more at peace with him and with herself, gradually the sense of what had happened pierced her and the thought of Rose took the first place in her mind.

When she returned with Monica she repeated her words of thanks. But looking up into Trelling's eyes, she met there a hurt—a disappointment so keen that she was stopped by it, her words died on her lips, and when she took up the broken sentence she could not steady her voice.

It was the best explanation he could have had. In that sudden break Robert understood a great part of what had happened. He knew then—and Ruth knew that he knew—that he was irretrievably her lover, in spite of everything, in spite even of her own denial. The knowledge overthrew her egoism and brought her a joy so unexpected and entire that she was free to forget herself and turn all her thoughts to Rose.

Monica Holden greeted Robert enthusiastically, both hands outstretched; her pleasure in his news was complete.

"Dear Robert, it is splendid," she said over and over again. Then drawing three chairs into a circle, "Now then, talk! Did the police do anything in the end?"

"Everything I know I have got through the police," said Robert, sitting down and preparing to tell the story. "When Rose got to London, she went to the house of an actress—a Miss Rosa Larose—whom Mrs. de Winton used to know. I have seen this lady. She is not an ornament to the profession. She spends most of her time in 'resting,' I should say; and she is habitually hard up. She had quarreled with Mrs. de Winton—I judge that she had tried to borrow money from that lady. But she took Rose in and she tried to help her to get what she wanted—a dancing engagement at some hall or theater. It was no use. She says the girl's dancing was not the right sort—not what was wanted either for the ballet or for a chorus girl. Besides, Rose had no money to start her, and Miss Larose was not in a position to help. The girl's

looks were gone, too. I gather that she was physically and mentally prostrate. She had no go in her, this actress woman said. She spoke angrily, as if the girl had been an irritating drag on her. Anyhow, it ended when Miss Larose got a small engagement with some traveling company. She could not take the girl with her. She was giving up her rooms, so she left Rose with all the help she could afford her—some few shillings. That was in February last. After that”—he hesitated—“she was adrift. The detectives got traces of her here and there, but always too late. Now they know where she is. She is in the house of one Madame Anita, who has a door-plate calling herself a Court Dressmaker. She is notorious. She has some apprentices, and it is practically certain that Rose is one of these. The detectives can do no more. They have no one who can identify the girl with certainty. If they identified her they have no authority to take her away. That is how the matter stands. We want somebody now—some person who knows not merely Rose’s appearance, but Rose herself.”

Trelling stopped, like one who has made his report and waits for instructions. He looked at Monica Holden. But Ruth’s eyes were fixed upon him intently. A purpose shaped itself in her mind.

“I am that person!” she said at last.

Trelling turned sharp on her with a sudden change of tone.

“You—Impossible!”

“Why?”

He paused for a moment and then slowly added: “Don’t you understand? This house where Rose is, is not a place where you could go to under any circumstances. I thought that perhaps Miss Holden might——”

But Ruth broke in upon him.

“Aunt Monica! Oh, no, I am the proper person to find—my sister.”

Monica looked at the girl, transfigured in her excitement; half faltering she added her protest.

“Dear Ruth, Robert is right. It would be impossible for a young girl like you to go alone to such a place. Truly, you do not know what you are talking about.”

"It is just because I do know what I am talking about," cried Ruth with sudden heat, "that I can go. And I know too that you and Robert are fighting now for those old horrors that have made me so miserable—those silent secret things that are never to be known or spoken of. If these things hurt and kill women—women just like me, who are less fortunate than I am, why am I never to be told about them? What nonsense it all is! Anything in the world can be spoken of and handled if you want to set it right. I shall go to this place, and I shall take Rose away with me and nobody will hurt me. I dare you to say that you believe that anybody will hurt me!"

Ruth spoke with passion, as one pleading for her right.

"How do you propose to proceed?" asked Trelling dryly after a moment's silence.

Ruth was quick with her answer.

"This woman is a dressmaker. I shall go and order a dress."

"Yes, of course." Robert smiled at her petulance. "Do you suppose that I had not already thought of that? But Miss Holden is the proper person to order the dress—not you!"

Ruth's growing triumph broke into amusement. By that remark he had proved his incompetence to direct her.

"Oh, Robert! Aunt Monica!" She turned affectionately to Miss Holden in her gown of Quaker gray. "Who would suspect Aunt Monica of wanting a 'Court' dress?"

The general laugh that followed her exaggerated dismay turned the argument, and after a moment's hesitation Monica Holden, who apparently had changed her mind, now added a word in Ruth's behalf.

"I think, Robert," she said gently, "that if Ruth feels that she can carry this thing through, she might try. I did not think so at first, but—well, she might try."

Trelling was beaten. He made a gesture of disapproving assent.

"Oh, well," he shifted his position impatiently, "if you both——"

"That's right!" said Ruth radiantly. "Robert, I didn't know you were so sensible! The thing is settled."

Then for the first time Trelling looked up and laughed. His eyes met Ruth's in a quick admiration that was answered by gratitude. Their reconciliation was complete.

"You are a masterful woman," he said, shaking his head at her. "Have your own way."

Therefore on the following morning, after Ruth had been put in possession of every fact concerning Rose that had been ascertained, a hansom containing Monica Holden waited at Madame Anita's door in a back street in Bloomsbury. Ruth stood upon the doorstep, not afraid, but anxious.

However, the words "Court Dressmaker" reassured her, and she stood reading them over and over again. These were strangely incongruous with the grubby surroundings. What sort of dress, for what sort of court, could ever come from such a place? A dirty child sitting on the step at her feet stared at her, and a passing organ grinder doffed his cap. Once more she turned desperately to the bell.

At last the door was partially opened by a foreign manservant in a stained black suit, who had apparently the greatest difficulty in understanding her business. It was not until she had demanded first in French and then in German, to see Madame Anita, that he appeared to perceive the drift of her remarks. Madame, he said, was very much engaged, also she was sick, and he did not quite know if she was at home. He ended by declaring himself to be a Pole. He spoke French, English, and German, and he requested Mademoiselle to walk in.

Ruth found herself in a thick, acrid atmosphere which recorded the passing of much life and many meals. Coming from the fresh outer air she gasped. The man ushered her into a small front room and shut the door. With a certain relief, she noticed a round table covered with fashion plates and a half finished dress lying on a chair. She did not quite know what she had expected, but here, at least, were the signs of Madame Anita's professional calling. Then she glanced about her. The room was dusty and uncared for; the sun struggled through the dirty window panes, showing stains on

the tablecloth and on the red plush sofa and arm-chairs. Green Venetian blinds hung crookedly in the windows, which were draped in faded greasy plush, set off by a ball fringe. Some cheap pictures decorated the walls. A tall lamp with a torn red shade stood in one corner. A gilt mirror hung over the fireplace, and on the draped mantel-shelf behind it were two gilt Empire candlesticks, supported by tarnished eagles. Evidently the room was hardly ever used; its atmosphere was replete with dust, and the fumes of stale drink hung heavily about it. It was as stale as that of the hall, and the furniture itself was as stale as the atmosphere. Indeed it seemed almost as though the atmosphere emanated from the furniture, which seemed to be stuffed with the dirt of many crowded years; it kept the odor, as it were, of unpleasant lives—the touch of greasy human beings. Ruth shuddered. Where had it all come from? A foreign hotel perhaps, or restaurant. It was dirty and tawdry, but in its character essentially un-English. There was no sound in the house except now and again the tread of footsteps overhead. From the next street the music of a barrel organ came muffled through the shut windows. Soon the footsteps fell into order. Someone was walking up and down. Perhaps it was Rose! Ruth's overwrought imagination jumped wildly at the idea, and then fell as wildly into despair at the absurdity of her hope. Then she began to be afraid. The torpor of the room oppressed her. Something sinister it seemed lurked in the sluggish plush and dirty gilding. She felt crushed, weary, and full of apprehension.

She walked to the window, and the sight of Monica waiting for her outside brought comfort; so that when the door opened and Madame Anita appeared she had gained command over her unruly thoughts. They were now marshaled and in order; so well governed was she that she had courage to survey her new acquaintance with well-disguised curiosity.

Madame Anita was a Frenchwoman with a hard, smooth face and sharp eyes; she had a tight, round figure and a solid bust radiant with jet ornaments; she walked like a policeman. So well did she speak English it might have been her native tongue; in France she sometimes passed as an English-

woman—so she said in answer to Ruth's compliment; but the girl doubted that statement, for to her own people her contours and coloring must surely have betrayed her.

Ruth explained that, seeing the plate upon the door, and being in want of a dressmaker, she had come to order a gown, and Madame Anita accepted her statement and her orders quietly, and took her measurements. She could not let her have the gown for a month, she said, and she entered Miss Templeton's name and address in a notebook that she carried in a bag at her waist. After that she bowed her out of the stuffy hall, her undisturbed black eyes searching, it seemed, Ruth's very soul.

As the door closed behind her the girl experienced a sharp reaction. The fresh air, the life of the streets, and Monica's expectant face woke her from a sort of lethargy. She had reached the outer world. But—what had she accomplished? What had it all amounted to? Nothing. As far as Rose was concerned she might just as well have stayed away, for she was no nearer finding her than before. She took her place in the cab dejectedly.

"Well, my dear, and what happened?"

"Nothing." Ruth pulled out her handkerchief and wiped away a stray tear; her disappointment was immense. "Nothing at all. What you said was quite true. I have no experience. I had hoped she would have—I don't know what I had hoped. It seems absurd to talk about it now. I could hardly have expected that Rose would come to interview us, could I?" She laughed mirthlessly. "Well, you trusted me with an important bit of business and I have failed, that's all."

Monica patted the girl's hand and administered comfort.

"One has to go slowly in these things," she said in conclusion. "You have found out a good deal about the woman. I suppose she will fit the dress."

"She says she will, and that she will let me know when to come. Probably I shall get a letter to say that she has returned to Paris or something of that sort. My own private opinion is that she has no more intention of making me a dress than I had of ordering one. But I am a bad detective, Aunt Monica.

I suppose after all it is better to leave these things to the proper people."

The cab drove on, and for the rest of the way Ruth sat silent, overwhelmed by a sense of failure that was as wholehearted as her previous elation.

The couple lunched in comparative silence, busy with many schemes that seemed ingenious until the inevitable flaw presented itself, wrecking each in turn.

In the early afternoon Ruth drew up a chair to the window looking out over the balcony railings, as she had done on the previous day. The little episode had broken into her dreariness, bringing a brief activity, but now she had failed in her undertaking, her confidence had gone, she relapsed once more into gray despondency.

As she had done yesterday, she scanned once more the carriages, the motors, the faces of the passers-by. Once more she was convinced of their unreality—positive that having reached the square at the end of the street they would vanish into thin smoke. But as she watched it seemed that there were more of them than yesterday. They were standing still owing to some block in the traffic, and it appeared to her suddenly that the whole street was filled with vehicles. An omnibus driver shouted insulting pleasantries to a motor driver, dignified carriages and restless hansoms waited in the crowd impatiently. Ruth could not see what had happened, for the accident, if accident it was, had taken place at a corner of the street, not as far off as the Square, but still out of sight. She leant over the balcony listlessly, not much interested, but eager in a dull way to see what had happened. However, she saw nothing and turned back to the French window with one last glance at the throng below her.

But that glance checked her going. She stood riveted. Then with a quick movement she wheeled round and stared with open eyes. From out of that crowd one face had swam into her consciousness dealing her a sudden blow. It was that of a woman in a waiting hansom. It was a sharp, tight face, yellow and smooth as amber, with eyes black and bright and hard as jet: an immobile face with no human movement in it

—no blood—no nerves. As Ruth looked, she felt transported into that grimy room in Bloomsbury, she smelt its filth, she realized its curious oppression. The woman had not seen her; she was leaning out of the cab and scanning the numbers on the doors. Chance had brought her down that particular street in the course of a long drive to a remote part of London, and she had remembered suddenly the address of her visitor of the morning; it scarcely interested her—yet she looked out.

Ruth stood still, hypnotized by that yellow face, lifted in a dream—a nightmare, rather—into that horrible room; and then, from somewhere out of the vague immensity that surrounded her, there came a prompting. It was peremptory—definite—the voice of her own soul speaking with authority. She obeyed the inspiration. Without a moment's pause she hurried back into the room and shut the window. There she came face to face with Monica, who, startled by the strangeness of her expression, questioned her.

"What's the matter? You look as though you had seen a ghost."

"I have," replied Ruth quickly, "and it has made me feel quite queer. I feel like the man who said he wrestled not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, and rulers of darkness. I am going back at once to that place in Bloomsbury."

"In that case it might be some advantage to feel like St. Paul," returned Monica. "But won't you explain a little more fully about your ghost?"

"It's down there," said Ruth, "in a cab—that woman, Madame Anita! But I must go at once. I must get there before she returns. There is not a minute to be lost——"

"I shall go with you," answered Monica.

In less than ten minutes their cab stood at Madame Anita's door. The dirty child still sat upon the step, and the organ still played in the side street. Trembling, Ruth rang the bell; she could hardly breathe for the strong excitement that tore at her heart. She waited. There was no response. Nothing happened. Time, it seemed, stood still. Then a wave of an-

guish swept through her. The house was shut up! Everybody was away or—dead. All her efforts were useless. The door was locked. She could return empty to her blank lodging. And Rose—ah, poor Rose! She could not bear to think of her. She rang again and again. At last there was a faint sound behind the door. Someone was coming! Then the latch was drawn back, the door partially opened and the greasy manservant looked through the aperture.

"Not at 'ome!" he exclaimed effusively. "No one 'ere! Notting! Notting!"

But Ruth was ready with her excuse, and it was a circumstantial one. She had just met Madame Anita in a cab. Madame had begged her to go in and wait, as there was important business it was necessary to talk over. Madame herself would be returning almost at once.

The man looked doubtful. It was true that Madame had gone out in a cab. But, the rest!—he was undecided.

"Madame told me that you would not expect me," continued Ruth, wondering vaguely at her own powers of lying; it seemed as though someone not herself was speaking; "she said that you might not let me in, as you had been told to admit nobody, that if I explained everything to you it would be all right."

The door was opened a few inches wider as the man drew back, muttering.

Drawing a deep breath Ruth brushed past him into the hall. Here was the same foul atmosphere grown familiar in how short a time; but she had no leisure to think about it now. She opened the sitting room door with a sense of old acquaintance, and pulling out one of the plush-covered chairs sank down as though she were well accustomed to its touch and odor.

The man retired sulkily; he was not sure if he had done right. Ruth waited until the sound of his footsteps had died away along the passage; then she stood up; her heart knocked against her side until it hurt her; tears of excitement stood in her eyes. She was here in Madame Anita's house—alone. She opened the door cautiously. Nothing stirred. Afraid of

her own footsteps she crept to the staircase, then slowly, noiselessly, up the stairs to the first floor. A door stood opposite to her. She listened. There were voices—women's voices—talking inside the room. She did not recognize them. Rose was not there. She listened at another door to the right; there was no sound, evidently that room was empty. She crept up again to the next floor; here there was a landing and three rooms in a row. A little further along there was another door. There was no sound from any of them. She opened the first cautiously.

"Rose," she said under her breath.

The room was partially darkened. An outlined form lay upon the bed. It moved with a jerk and a woman's voice spoke in querulous tones: "What do you want? My head's no better. Why do you come worrying me? I shan't come down for no one." The atmosphere was nauseating; Ruth shut the door quickly.

Then she stood still and fear dropped upon her. She felt like a thief in a strange house. The creak of the boards—the voices down below—the distant noises in the street—filled her with unimaginable terrors. She was cold—shivering. She could hardly stand. The thumping of her heart sickened her; her head reeled and there was a singing in her ears.

But she must go on. She could not go back now. And indeed it would be almost more terrifying to go back—to fly in sudden panic down the staircase of that terrible house, pursued by she knew not what; perhaps to meet its owner on the doorsteps, to stand like a criminal before that woman (who was indeed a criminal), detected in an outrageous lie, unable to defend herself, or to account in any way for her presence in the place.

All this faced Ruth Templeton—Ruth Templeton, whose besetting sin was pride. She was indeed brought low. She had become a spy in a house of bad repute.

But these thoughts had no real hold over her. They were kept at bay by a desire of greater moment, her desire towards Rose—Rose, her sister. This had power to banish even her fear. There seemed nothing else in the world that mat-

tered now but Rose. And Rose was here, helpless in the hands of that ferine monster of a woman, and perhaps suffering.

A wave of sudden emotion lifted her.

"Rose!" she cried—at first below her breath and then louder. "Rose, where are you?"

What did it matter if she was heard? If everybody in the house heard her, then Rose would hear her also. If she was questioned she would inquire boldly for Rose de Winton. There was nothing to be afraid of. Nobody could hurt her. All her pain had been the stress of her own imagination, all her fears—chimeras. She was free now, and full of strength. "Rose, Rose, where are you?"

She stopped breathless. There was a sound—a faint noise from the room at the end of the passage. The door opened slowly and a woman's face looked out.

Ruth stood still and once more she shivered—not from fear now, but from the fascination of pure horror. She felt as though she was in a dream and this was what she had waited for. Now the expected thing had happened, and she stood transfixed, chained, unable to speak or move. The face was dazed, the eyelids blinked—heavy with sleep. The face was the face of—but was it Rose? She did not know. Then the eyelids lifted steadily showing the eyes, now awakened, were dilated and frightened. The features were attenuated; the hollowed cheek-bones showed patches of livid rouge; the lips were red and hard, and the mouth and chin were lined to ghastliness.

The girl took a step forward. She had shriveled, it seemed, the neck was yellow and bony, the back bent, the breast—that fair, white, rounded breast—was shrunken.

Great Heaven, what was this handful of skin and lifeless bone?

A young girl—Rose de Winton? Impossible!

But even as Ruth looked a dawning recognition appeared in the eyes. Her question was answered. It was indeed Rose—her sister. This thing, this specter, this travesty of a human being was what other human beings had made of fair flesh and an honest soul.

And yet, God reigned in heaven and never spoke.

Then in Ruth Templeton's heart it seemed suddenly that something snapped. Tears poured down her cheeks. She held the broken body to her warm bosom, heart against heart—she kissed the reddened lips, while her tears fell upon the girl's face.

"Rose, darling—dearest. I have come to take you away!"

Rose drew back, pushing weakly at the encircling arms.

"What are you talking about? I don't want you. I'm all right."

But at the end of so long a quest, Ruth was not now to be daunted.

"Listen, Rose," she said, "Aunt Monica is in a cab downstairs. Go to her—run—she will take you home, and we will make you well, and love you. But go quickly."

With scarcely any perceptible change of expression in her face, the girl's hand passed to her bodice, drawing it feebly together. Her skirt hung on her hips, leaving an untidy gap about her waist, she touched that too.

"I can't go like this! I'm ill. Better leave me alone." Then she turned as though struck by a sudden terrified remembrance. "How did you get in? Where is—she?"

Ruth was now in an agony of apprehension, and the startled eyes increased her fear.

"She is out, but she may come in at any moment. Oh, Rose darling, be sensible! Run quickly or it will be too late. Here"—pulling herself away, she wrenched off her jacket and forced it on the girl. "Put this on—and this hat. Don't mind me. I will get out somehow. Now you are all right—quite tidy—they suit you," she added, laughing painfully through her tears. "Now go!"

But Rose still hesitated. "I can't," she said in a curious apathy. "I am afraid. I can't run. I don't want anything. I don't feel anything. I don't care for anything, I think I am going to die."

"Don't talk nonsense!" cried Ruth in desperation. "I forbid you to remain here."

She caught at the thin hand, and with one arm round the

girl's waist she pulled her down the stairs on to the next floor. Rose did not resist, and again in her sudden acquiescence Ruth touched unreality. On the next landing all was silent as before, but for the shuffle of their footsteps and the voices of the women in the room opposite the staircase—they were still talking and their commonplace tones, broken now and then by a sudden burst of laughter, brought to Ruth a violent sense of contrast in familiar things.

"Now," she turned to Rose peremptorily. "Don't talk! Don't think! Don't stop! Run! Do as I tell you!"

Her orders were obeyed. As though glad at last to be so directed the slight frail form of what used to be Rose de Winton slid noiselessly down the staircase—paused, swayed, gathered strength—went on, passed through the outer door and—disappeared.

Then with her first free breath Ruth Templeton struggled with laughter and with tears. The thing was accomplished, and the reaction that this brought was so intense that she became almost hysterical. But the sharp bang of the hall door recalled her wits. Rose had left it open and now it shut to noisily of itself. What could she do? There was no time to follow Rose and fly also. She could hear the dragging footsteps of the man as he climbed the basement steps to see what had occurred. She descended a few steps and watched him, as half puzzled he glanced round the empty passage. From the sound, he had imagined that his mistress had returned. He was slightly alarmed and his fears grew, at the apparition of the young lady he had admitted unwillingly some twenty minutes past, standing hatless on the staircase. Also she was in a state of obvious excitement; he could see that her fingers trembled. Without attempting to veil his misgivings he stared suspiciously at her bare head.

Ruth felt instinctively that unless she took the initiative she was lost. The man's face was truculent. She must at all costs say something. But what? She could not imagine. Scarcely knowing what she did she put her hand to her head.

"Where is my hat?" she demanded imperatively. Her face

was full of astonishment—probably at her own extraordinary words. But they had the desired effect. The man fell back.

"At!" he repeated, "*Chapeau!*" His amazement led him to the use of French.

"Yes," returned Ruth growing calmer as she felt her advantage. "Somebody has stolen my hat."

"*Quelq'un a volé un chapeau! Le chapeau de Mademoiselle! Pas possible!*"

"*Mais oui!*" returned Ruth, her tongue it seemed spoke for her. "*C'est bien possible!* It has happened. What am I to do? It was hot, I took my hat off. I went to the front door for a little air, when I came back it had disappeared. Perhaps someone took it by mistake. But I cannot wait to find it now. I will write to Madame Anita. I must go at once." She lifted her scarf and flung one end over her hair. "Now call me a hansom."

Taking no notice of her words the man went into the sitting room and looked about him vaguely. Seeing no hat he returned to Ruth, who stood at the open door. He suggested politely that it would be better if the lady waited, especially as her business with Madame was so important. But Ruth was obdurate.

"I cannot wait without a hat," she insisted; "I must go at once."

"But someone has taken it by mistake! I must ask—ask upstairs if anybody knows," said the man, staring and hesitating. "Miss cannot leave the house in this manner."

Ruth was silent. She could see a hansom driving towards her in a leisurely jog trot. "Yes," she replied at last. "Someone may have taken it. You had better ask upstairs. Ask everybody in the house, please. Don't come down without it."

She stood still until the man had disappeared. Then scarcely knowing what she did in her eagerness, she ran to meet the cab.

"Quick!" she said to the driver, giving the address. "Drive fast and I will give you extra money."

She lay back in her seat with closed eyes, thankful for the jerk and quick rattle that told her of speed.

"Rose is found! Rose is found!" Her thoughts resolved themselves into a joyful pæan. Nothing in the world could matter now. In all that had happened she had felt the desire of Elizabeth urging her to action. Now the last quest had been achieved and Rose was in safe keeping.

But Rose—ah, poor Rose! Her heart went out to the girl in sudden longing. That she should laugh once more, strong of body and free of soul, confident in the sunshine, Ruth was determined.

The cab stopped. She paid the man hurriedly and rushed upstairs to the sitting-room.

The room was very quiet. Rose was lying on the sofa, while Monica, bent over her, held something in a tumbler. Rose did not notice Ruth, but a faint smile hung upon her worn reddened lips.

"What is the matter?" said Ruth breathlessly. "Is Rose ill?"

"Yes," Monica turned towards her. "Rose is—ill." There was something in her face that held Ruth's attention, sweeping away all trivial detail from her mind. It was very grave. Pity and judgment sat enthroned in her deep eyes. She stood hushed as though in the presence of some stupendous tragedy. Then with a familiar gesture that brought eternal issues to the level of the most trifling human need, she pulled the coverlet over the girl's feet.

Ruth sank on her knees at the foot of the couch, hiding her face between her hands, and half articulated words rose to her lips.

"*Almighty God,*" she prayed, "*unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid—*" She got no further in her prayer—it was enough.

That same evening, when Rose had been got to bed, and the sick room arranged under the direction of Robert Trelling, he and Ruth sat together for a long time, talking quietly. They were alone, for Monica was with the patient. Under the shadow of such ruin very little had been said between them of their own affairs; and yet all had been said, and once the

barriers were lifted, each found in the other the fulfillment of a nature but half completed. They wondered vaguely how it could have been that they had never realized themselves before. The world, and even the thought of Rose de Winton in the hour of her agony, dropped from them; and the past with all its warfare passed away, for in the touch of each other's hands they had reached peace. Crying quietly and without pain, her cheek on Robert's shoulder and his arm holding her, as it were, away from the anguish of these past months, Ruth told all that was in her heart—all her unspoken trouble, her weariness, the sudden coldness that had struck her when he came to say that Rose had been discovered. All was confessed and understood, and in this mutual comprehension there was a vitality and sweetness that made it more than mere joy, something rather that held the essence of joy—and of pain also—but transcended both.

Then later, their thoughts still possessed by one another—but now that all had been said, free to wonder—they talked of Rose de Winton and the strange fate that had linked the sisters' lives. Through Rose, Ruth had been saved from a misery compared to which death itself would have been merciful; through Ruth Rose had been dragged, although at the last moment, from the very dregs and rubbish of the world, and her feet set in a fair ground. And yet it was uncertain if she would ever live to look upon it. Trelling with all his skill could not foretell the future.

So the first hours of their happiness passed by—not unobserved, but so much observed that every moment was marked and precious—until a clock struck eleven and Trelling reluctantly rose to his feet. The brief parting for the night had become a difficult thing.

But Ruth's mind was full of the subject on which they had been talking; she could not drop it.

"You know, Robert," she said emphatically, "it was really mother who brought this all about—the finding of Rose, I mean! If it had not been for mother, Rose would have died in that awful house. If mother had judged all this from the ordinary virtuous standpoint—as I, or perhaps, any woman

not so good as she was, might have judged it—then Rose——” She stopped. “Ah, we cannot talk about it now, it is all too near! But look back to the beginning of things and you will find that it was mother who first made us think of Rose, who first cared if she lived or died. Now mother is dead, but her wish remains—we are only carrying it out.”

“Lady Templeton stood for a power in the world that is not destroyed by death,” said Trelling slowly.

“That’s what I mean,” cried Ruth. “It goes on and on—it has altered your life, and mine, and Rose’s, and through us it goes on—to numberless other people. How absurd to talk as though mother’s influence were ended, because she isn’t here!”

The idea pleased Trelling, for he had loved Lady Templeton, and afterwards when he was strolling home through the darkness he recalled it. He was in an exalted state to-night, after the various incidents of the day, and he speculated on many things, chiefly on the worth of human love and sacrifice. As he pictured the fair face of his Ruth, the beauty of Elizabeth, more mature, but sweet and gracious even as her daughter, rose before him; and in the sound of Ruth’s voice, still in his ears, there came the tones that had reached him one morning long ago, in the midst of a hard trouble.

“It is not less love that is wanted in the world, my dear, but more—a great deal more.”

And the words were those of Elizabeth Templeton, whose life had culminated not in fulfillment, but in sacrifice.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

"Which of you can at the same time laugh and be exalted?
He who strideth across the highest mountains laugheth at all tragedies,
whether of the stage or of life."

NIETZSCHE: *Zarathustra I.*

"The love of all under the light of the sun
Is but brief longing, and deceiving hope
And bodily tenderness; but love is made
Imperishable fire under the boughs
Of chrysoberyl and beryl and chrysolite
And chrysoprase and ruby and sardonyx."

W. B. YEATS

THE instinct of youth is always apart from human volition, set towards life; and even as Rose lay hoping—if such an apathetic movement of the mind can in any sense be termed hope—for the end, all her feeble strength was pitted against her will, and in the silence of the sickroom life and death fought on equal terms. Ruth and Monica nursed her night and day. But the sick girl did not want their ministrations.

"Let me alone!" was her continual cry; "why can't I die in peace!" It was as though, through them, she were being deprived of the best gift life had to offer to her and such as her, as though, having searched the earth diligently for living room and not finding it, she had earned the right to die.

But between her and death there stood not only the natural resistance of her own flesh, but another will, the will of Ruth Templeton. Ruth had searched for her sister and had found her; and now in the strength of her love she defied even death on her behalf. Through love—a love such as Rose de Winton had never dreamt of—the force of her own life seemed to flow into that broken body. She sat for long stretches of time at the bedside thinking of her, and of Robert, and of her

mother; and in those silent hours she gained an apprehension—a perception of her own heart, with its powers and its limitations that would never have come to her in the hurry of many activities. It is during silence that life germinates, actions for good or evil grow from quiescence; and in the tranquillity of the days that followed that one day of wild and mixed emotions, Ruth's love for the two persons nearest to her—Robert, and now Rose—unfolded itself. In loving Rose it seemed to Ruth that she loved Robert the more, and in this she discovered the paradox of love that it is most concentrated when most diffused. To love many people is to love one person the more: to love everybody is to love God. She discovered also that love can only exist in the present tense—it has no past or future; and in this, the further paradox, that it endures only in the drawing of a breath. Once love becomes a memory it is dead, and is therefore—like any other spiritual gift—a thing that can only be used—not kept. As most of the hypocrisies of the world are built on the memory of past ideals, so most of its disillusionments are based on the memory of dead affections. In each case a living thing is sought for among the tombs, and when it is not found human nature prompts us to cry out on life.

Therefore the love that Ruth had now to offer Robert Trelling was a larger thing than the love of even a few weeks back. It was no longer restless, it held no touch of self-assertion, no taint of jealousy; it was greater than passion, though passion was a part of it; it was greater than happiness, although happiness was necessarily a part of it: it was as great as life itself. And he, loving her, understood more completely as time went on, how her whole nature had unfolded under the touch of true passion, which softens and strengthens where the false enervates and saps. The knowledge filled him with a deep thankfulness. To him also the world had become changed and for the first time, in the distractions of many affairs—a place of peace.

Of these two people there is little more to say; but of the third, Rose de Winton—Rose, to whom so much had been denied; Rose, who would never know the love of husband

or of child as she had never known the love of parent or of friend; Rose, whose whole passionate nature had cried only for human life stainless and courageous, and who had received in answer to her prayer, inhuman shame, agony, and banishment—what of her? Rose lay silent, scarcely breathing, and for a while Fate held back her hand.

The days passed on until the autumn leaves dropped from the trees and the world of fashionable London returned from the country or the Continent—the frivolous to the business of pleasure, and the serious to the pleasure of religion or philanthropy. But Monica Holden and Ruth Templeton remained in their quiet street and watched over a wounded life. After long waiting their anxiety gradually lessened, for in spite of herself, Rose grew daily stronger. Force came back to her limbs and color to her face, but her will was broken and her outlook upon the world darkened. She never laughed, though now and again at rare intervals, a fleeting, half grudging smile flashed across her face. Then it dropped, and the deep gloom in which she moved again shrouded her. She was touched by no emotion except, perhaps at intervals, some violent and unexpected fit of sobbing.

To Ruth it was as though the girl she had known in Cornwall had vanished utterly, leaving not a trace of what had once been Rose. She seemed to have been superseded, crushed out of knowledge by this strange creature who knew neither gratitude nor affection, hard to the core, and encompassed by a clouded reserve. Even her face and body were altered; the face of Rose de Winton had been tender and sensitive, full also of an intense vitality; her beauty had been the beauty of color, of motion. Her hands had fluttered in expressive movement, her feet had danced in an excess of life, her supple waist—her soft, firm breast—the poise of her hips, the set of her shoulders, were all the expression of emphatic and beautiful womanhood. She had grown as a flower, fair and straight and strong, opening out towards happiness as to the sun, and as a flower she had withered when the sunlight had been withdrawn. Darkness had sapped her color, and foul creatures had preyed upon her wholesome life. All that remained now

was the mere form, the fabric—blank, lifeless, robbed of everything.

Sometimes Ruth despaired, and wondered if she had not set herself an impossible task. Rose listened when she talked, but had no answer for her in return: her face never altered its expression: she dashed Ruth's sympathy and frustrated all her efforts at friendship.

Occasionally in the evenings Monica read aloud, and now and again Rose became interested in some story or poem, but more often she sat looking in front of her and paying no attention.

"That's a nice tale," she said once on one of the rare occasions, when she had listened. "It's a pity it's not true."

The story had been one of sacrifice, and Ruth sprang to defend it with all her faith.

"The world is full of splendid things like that!" she said hotly. "One hears of them again and again."

"Is it?" was the slow answer. "I have never heard of them."

Then Rose sank back into apathy and Ruth said no more, for if she talked too long the girl forgot to listen. Rose took all that was offered to her grudgingly, without a word of thanks either to Ruth or Monica. She did not know why they looked after her. She did not care. She avoided Robert Trelling, and never spoke to him unless she was obliged.

But Ruth refused to accept the notion that Rose could remain for ever in this state of mental paralysis. She was convinced from that one brief and stormy interview at Trevean that something lay behind this apparent callousness; on that day she had spoken from the fullness of her heart and had been answered in the same way. All the witchcraft of despair could not make her forget that. She had seen the truth. Therefore she shut her eyes to the lying appearance, and her ears to the lying phrases in which the girl condemned herself. Reason whispered that this sister on whom she poured out her love was only a creature of her own imagination; but she fell back upon Faith as being the longer-sighted of the two, and if faith failed her, well then, her own love should justify

her, for out of a stone it would create by its own almightiness—a human heart. The words—her mother's words—that she had repeated to Robert Trelling under the stress of great emotion, now came back to her in another set of circumstances.

Hope where there is no hope, and your hope will be fulfilled. Have faith when faith is proved to be impossible, and your faith will be justified. Live in a Fool's Paradise and it will become a real one.

Ruth had never told Rose of the relationship that existed between them. It seemed impossible to break through her reserve and touch the subject. She wished the telling of it to be more than a mere statement of a fact, but Rose's silence forbade even a bare utterance of the truth. Monica had told Rose the incidents of Ruth's engagement to Hugh Templeton, also that he had left England for an indefinite time, and Rose had listened in silence without a flicker of expression. She seemed to be afraid of being questioned. Not a word of any sort as to her past ever crossed her lips. Her conversation, meager as it was, dated from the moment when she took up her life with Ruth and Monica. The days passed her silent and empty; she scarcely ever occupied herself. On Sundays she refused to go to church, but sat alone looking out of the window, with her hands folded in her lap before her.

One day she asked a question.

"What are you going to do with me?" The words came abruptly after a sudden sharp indrawing of the breath. The thought had evidently been troubling her.

"Nothing," answered Ruth. "You are—that is if you wish it—to live here."

"But—you are to be married to Dr. Trelling soon."

"Then you can live with me," said Monica quietly.

"Why?"

"Why!" Monica laughed as she repeated the girl's question; "because, my dear, it pleases me to have you."

According to her habit, Rose did not reply, but her mind it seemed was busy with the subject. Sometimes she appeared to be thinking deeply, and then she had a curious way of

passing her hand quickly two or three times across her eyes.

The clothes that Ruth bought for her interested her more than anything else. She often talked about them, but gave no clue as to her like or dislike of any particular garment. Ruth dressed her just as she thought fit, and Rose looked upon the clothes as belonging to Ruth. She took extraordinary care of them and brushed and folded them continually.

One day when Ruth and Monica were together in their sitting room Rose opened the door quickly and stood before them, hesitating, as though she were eager to make a request.

"Well, darling, what is it?" said Ruth. "Were you going to ask for something?"

Rose still hesitated, and then blushed; the red crept up to the roots of her hair and flooded her neck.

Ruth got up from her chair and put her hand caressingly on the girl's shoulder.

"Don't be afraid, dear Rose. Did you want something?"

"Yes." There was a long pause, and then with an effort Rose forced out the words, "A sewing machine—treadle, please. Could I," she added, gaining courage—"could you, I mean, hire one?"

"A sewing machine!" repeated Ruth in amazement.

Rose did not reply; her hands picked nervously at the tablecloth. "If I had a sewing machine and some stuff, I could make blouses and petticoats and things for myself. It would save you."

"Dear Rose!" A laugh sprang to Ruth's lips, but she checked it suddenly as she saw that for some incomprehensible reason her amusement was a pain to her companion. This request had evidently cost her a good deal of anxiety; it was a serious thing.

The sewing machine was chosen and ordered. Rose paid great attention to its various parts; she examined them carefully, taking them to pieces, and then fixing them all together, thereby showing for the first time an interest, if not exactly pleasure, in something that had been done for her. After that she sewed perpetually in her bedroom, and if

Monica had not forced her to take exercise she would have spent all her days at the work. She made a set of underlinen for herself and afterwards, by hand, some very beautiful things for Ruth. They were fine as a web, and of exquisite workmanship. When they were finished she presented them gravely without a smile.

Ruth was touched by the gift. "How did you learn to do such lovely needlework?"

"I—I——" Rose stammered. "In a—home. Some sisters taught me." Again the deep flush swept her forehead and her hand passed quickly across her eyes.

Trelling listened with interest when Ruth told him of this occurrence.

"She's getting better. Don't hurry her. She is like a delicate machine that has been injured in every part. It may be months before she is herself again. Leave her alone a good deal. Let her go her own way."

So Rose was left undisturbed. Her silence was never broken by any question, but she was met always by love and watchfulness.

The next incident that marked a certain progress towards health of mind—her bodily sanity was now established—occurred one day some months later. Monica had arranged to go to Trevean on a short visit, leaving Ruth and Rose together in town, and had written to Mrs. Renowden telling of her plans. She had corresponded a good deal with that kind-hearted old woman, chiefly on the subject of Rose, for whom Mrs. Renowden kept a real affection, and out of the correspondence there had grown up a sort of friendship between the two. Mrs. Renowden wrote now full of delight at the news; her letter came at breakfast-time and Monica read it aloud to the two girls. Trelling had thought it a mistake at this point to keep the past too sedulously from Rose; even if it hurt her, movement was necessary to her now—something to rouse her—to stab her, if need be, to a sense of life. So Miss Holden did not keep back one word of Mrs. Renowden's gossip, which, in spite of spelling that in no way set forth her accent, and an absence of that racy idiom which was unfitting

so she thought for transcription, brought the comfortable presence of the old woman up before them. They could see her kind old face, her cap, her voluminous skirts—they could almost hear her tones.

Rose listened in apparent unconcern until a name was mentioned that stung the red suddenly to her cheeks—that of Mary Gannet.

“Mary Gannet be back here again, poor flimsy thing,” wrote Mrs. Renowden; and Monica read the words faltering, but nevertheless she read them to the end; “her secret be out now an’ no mistake. There’s a strappin’ baby one month old to tell the tale. Some clergyman in London got her somewhere—to some institution, I’ve heard; not as she ever breathes a word to me or to anyone else for that matter, but it’s just the talk down here—an’ she not knowing what was in store for her went there (and to all accounts she carried on fine) till they was forced to part with her. Then the truth came upon her as a double blow, you might say, but her father forgave her—Heaven knows why, for he’s a hard man, is Gannet, but there it is, an’ there’s no getting over facts. So back she came to Tremellon with her shame upon her for all to see. But she won’t last long now, poor thing. The boy has got most of what life she’s had o’ late, and now she be that thin you could see through her, with sweats o’ nights an’ a cough that never stays. I say poor thing, but maybe it’s as well; she had no—what you might call—stability about her.”

The letter drifted on to other subjects, and as Monica went on reading it, she wondered, at the back of her mind, how she could have read the cruel words aloud. But Rose did not hear the rest. Mary Gannet! If it had not been for Mary Gannet perhaps she might have remained at Brentwood until this day. But Mary Gannet had broken into her stagnant days, bringing with her a breath of outside air so potent that it came to Rose as strong wine; and intoxicated with sudden memories and far-reaching hopes, and the passionate longing of the caged creature for a free life, she had broken through the bars and had found, not freedom, but a deeper

and more terrible slavery. But—Mary Gannet! Again Rose could hear the sing-song voice—"Ess fay, I du belong tu be!" Those nights passed side by side at Brentwood seemed to Rose to be a link that would bind them in eternity. Mary had suffered afterwards, but not as savagely as Rose had suffered, for her child had saved her. Still she was dying now—dying, as Rose had hoped—ah, how fervently!—to die also. An impulse stirred the girl's heart, a sudden longing to see and speak with her comrade in misfortune. Pity rose within her, for she also had tasted the bitterness of helplessness. Like her, Mary had been crushed through her own fault, but crushed nevertheless in the machine of civilization that demands a monetary payment for the right to live, and failing that, payment in flesh and spirit. Rose craved to see and speak with Mary Gannet. It was the first keen desire that she had experienced since her illness. Hardly knowing what she did, she expressed herself as was her habit in action. She rose from her chair and stretched out her hands towards Monica. The action was over-emphatic—exaggerated—but Rose was unconscious of it. She did not know that she had moved. She was merely for the moment the expression of her thought.

The letter was finished. Miss Holden laid it down and became aware at the same moment of Rose's agitation. She had never seen her look so eager. Her eyes kindled. A veil had been drawn away from before her face, revealing some of its old beauty. Ruth, watching, at last found it possible to believe that those parted lips might one day smile again.

"Could I—go with you—to Trevean?"

"Go with me! Why, Rose dear, I asked you to go some days ago and you wouldn't hear of such a suggestion!"

Monica spoke in surprise, for when she had mentioned it Rose had turned away from her proposal with a shudder. Now all was changed. Mary Gannet's name, it seemed, had been the talisman. But why? As far as Monica knew Rose had never come across the girl, and her present disturbance was inexplicable. "Of course you may go with me if you like," she added with a sigh, accepting the sudden transition

as another of those strange symptoms that had to be borne with in Rose de Winton as they knew her now.

But even as she spoke Rose's face had clouded. The enthusiasm that lighted it died away. The eyelids drooped; the mouth fell into the old weary curves. It was as though a sudden shining had vanished, leaving only the somber blackness of a frost.

Monica could hardly believe that any change in her had ever taken place at all; it was impossible now to picture that quick sunlight.

"What is it, Rose?" she asked hopelessly. "What are you thinking about now?" It was difficult to conceal her disappointment, although Monica Holden knew better than most people the impossibility of dealing with a wrecked life in the same way as with one which had never sustained such damage.

"What would I do when I had got there?"

That was all she could answer, and Monica, unacquainted with her thought, could give her no reply.

"It's—all—spending money," she added wearily. "I'm best here after all."

Then Ruth broke into the talk with a flood of argument and caresses. But she could not induce Rose to change her mind. The girl was obdurate.

"It's all spending money," she insisted.

This thought was at the root of Rose's sullenness; it had become a fixed idea; she could for the time realize no other. And what wonder if it were so! It had been burnt in upon her by bitter adventure that below a certain level of society, below the class to which Miss Templeton belonged, free men and free women were, in the practical working of things, the veriest slaves. Money was the life of the world. To lack money was to die. The poor were born to a debt which they paid to the last farthing with blood and muscle and with their immortal souls. That the world to the penniless was a debtor's prison became a fact bitten in upon Rose's heart, engraved there ineffaceably by the experience of her life. She was convinced that as an inmate of that prison she turned from one slavery but to meet another. Therefore, although now she was

bound to Ruth and to Monica Holden by ties of love and of gratitude, she was still bound, and their very goodness to her tied the knot more firmly. Therefore their arguments were useless; she would not make her debt greater than it was already. She had no answer to Ruth's endearments. She sat hopeless and drooping, folding her hands in the old attitude. Once more she resented the life that had been rescued from the grave and thrust as it were upon her, resented it with a bitterness inexpressible.

But even as she sat in her contracted world, thrown in as it were upon her own wretchedness, events were taking place outside that would for the last time in any obvious degree determine the way of her destiny.

Rosalie de Winton died.

She was killed suddenly in a motor accident, knocked down at the door of her own house in Princes Street, carried along by the flying motor, and crumpled into the dust. No one could tell if she had suffered. In one second all her petty interests, low ambitions, and coarse passions were obliterated by the one crude fact of death! Death is always brutal, soften it as we will, as life is, in its essence, brutal also. It is only when we forget these two facts that we can be refined. No one can tell in what mood, or sudden access of fury, Rosalie de Winton accepted the last crude fact of all. She died unwept as she had lived unloved, and for one night her grimy day girl crawled home unchidden.

Lord Berkhamstead read the news in an evening paper.

"So old Rosalie is dead!" he remarked to himself, taking off his eyeglasses and wiping them, not from any excess of emotion, but because the night was foggy. He dropped a tribute to his friend's memory in a phrase: "Shockin' old ruffian—Rosalie!" Then he grew meditative. "Wonder where the girl is! Gone the same way as the mother—no doubt of that, anyhow—bad blood—bad blood—both of 'em—but pretty—damned pretty!"

Mrs. de Winton's death put a fee into the pocket of Mr. Barnes, Sir Raymond Templeton's solicitor. He had duly advised Sir Raymond of the demise of his client, and had re-

ceived instructions to place the money standing in her name to that of her daughter, Rose de Winton. For the whereabouts of that young woman he was—to his amazement—referred to Sir Raymond's daughter, Miss Ruth Templeton.

Therefore it came about that Mr. Barnes waited upon Ruth in her London lodging, and heard from her maid, amid an inward clamor of scandalized propriety, that although Miss Templeton was not at home, Miss Rose de Winton would probably see him and deliver any message to her that he might leave. Mr. Barnes was too surprised to speak. He had accepted unmoved the fact of Rosalie de Winton's existence as a part of the world's order (or, may be—disorder), but that one roof could cover two women whose lives, by all the laws of morality as he convened them, should run eternally on separate lines, was a thing so abnormal and irregular that it left him stunned.

Rose de Winton had heard nothing of the accident. Neither Miss Holden nor Ruth had seen Rosalie's name in the newspapers, and the first intimation that Ruth received of it, and of the manner in which it affected Rose, was in a letter from Sir Raymond which had arrived that morning. His letter expressed something of the sentiment that had so deeply affected Mr. Barnes. The Baronet deplored his daughter's quixotic behavior, and assured her that the position she had taken up towards her new protégée was almost improper, in its emphasis. Now, moreover, she was, even from her own point of view, freed of her wrongly assumed responsibility. He was able to inform her that he had instructed Mr. Barnes to do all that was necessary. By rights Ruth should have known nothing of this girl's existence, but as by an unhappy chance she had done so, he could only press upon her the importance—the supreme importance—of letting such knowledge sink into oblivion. This was the last word he would ever write or speak on the subject. He added that Lady Templeton was in the best of health. She joined him in love to Ruth and all kind remembrances to Miss Holden. They were going on to Rome for the rest of the winter and did not expect to be back at Templeton until they returned for

Ruth's wedding in the early spring. Ruth tore the letter into little pieces and burnt it; then she went out, pondering how, on her return, she might best break the news of Rosalie's death to Rose.

But Mr. Barnes was before her.

His information, tactfully imparted, at the same time reliable and detailed with precision, came to Rose de Winton as a greater shock than he had imagined. For Mr. Barnes, thinking naturally under the circumstances that she knew the facts of her parentage, let slip the whole truth.

She heard now—first of her mother's sudden death, then of her relationship to Sir Raymond, and therefore necessarily to Ruth Templeton, and lastly of that settlement that made her independent of all charity. These three things—each in itself sufficient to bring about a change, a mental climax of some sort, fell with cumulative force upon a mind, not clouded or indeed injured now in any way, but set to rigidity in one direction.

The blow was so immense that under it Rose was stunned.

Mr. Barnes, having done his duty, retired. He was favorably impressed by Miss de Winton's self-restraint. She had taken the news very quietly.

After he had gone Rose crept upstairs to her bedroom. She took a few steps into the middle of the room. Then she stopped and stood motionless, her arms hanging at her sides, as she had stood once before when another episode in her life had—without any action on her part—been decided.

But her brain worked. Involuntarily her lips formed words, an outcome of its ferment.

"He—was—my cousin!" Then again. "His uncle—he—he—Hugh was my cousin!"

That was all. She never spoke of Hugh Templeton again. That quick gesture of a hand across her eyes, now habitual, swept the bitter memory of him away for ever. He had gone out of her life. But other things, vivid and importunate, pressed upon her until she was maddened by their appeal. She sank into a chair and sat there motionless—thinking, thinking—thinking.

An hour passed—two hours—three hours, and still she sat there. Her limbs grew numbed, but she did not know it; she sat still as a mummy, looking in upon a world of crowding, clamoring creatures—her own thoughts.

Then Fate, whose name is also Chance, let go her hand. Circumstances had done their work. At last Rose saw the truth—the truth about her sister and about herself. The knowledge changed her. She stood up—dazzled. She had passed from darkness into a blazing light.

Soon she became aware that somebody was knocking at the door. Ruth had returned. Hearing of Mr. Barnes' visit, she guessed what had happened, but waited for Rose to make some sign. However none had come, and as the hours passed she had grown nervous.

Rose opened the door. "Come in," she said.

But Ruth did not move. She remained staring at Rose, as though she had caught some of the strangeness that surrounded her. Rose knew now, she thought, knew everything! What did she think about it all? Did she care now? Would she ever care? No, she was still impassive. Ah, it was too crushing, too disappointing after all Ruth's hopes!

She moved forward with a little compelling gesture, as though she would have forced this cold obdurate girl to understand her love.

"Oh, my dear, my dear!"

But Rose evaded her outstretched hands.

Passionate always, impulsive, extravagant in her hope as in her despair, in her love as in her misery, Rose sank upon her knees to the ground and, catching at Ruth's dress, held it against her face. The tears streamed down her cheeks and fell on Ruth Templeton's feet.

"You—" she stammered, "you—do you know what you have done?—what you have been! You came to that house—that place—I can't describe it. I don't know the words. And—you kissed me! Do you remember, you kissed me on the lips. You didn't know how every hour in that house had marked me. You did not know what I was; you did not care! You did not do it because you wanted to be good; you did it be-

cause you loved me. You ate with me, and slept with me, and gave me your own clothes to wear. If I had been diseased it would have been the same. You would have kissed me just the same. Do you know what you have been? You have been like—Christ—to me! And—you don't know it! You don't know it!" She burst into sudden laughter, mixed with sobbing. "That's the funny part. That's what makes me laugh. *That* is goodness—not to know when it is good. *That* is love—not to know what it has given. My God, I ought to——"

She got no further, for with a quick movement Ruth laid a hand across her lips, while with the other she pulled her almost roughly to her feet. Ruth's face was crimson; her embarrassment at such words was painful, they were so exaggerated, so unrestrained—the comparison was appalling. Still the thing had been said now, never, if Ruth could help it, should it—or anything approaching it, be said again. Then she put her arms round Rose and drew her towards her. Without another word the sisters kissed each other.

Ruth told Robert Trelling something—not all—of what had occurred.

"So the cloud has lifted at last!" he exclaimed when she had finished. "Well, this is the real Rose now, for good or bad." His fingers closed over the hand laid in his that asked for sympathy. "Dearest, I'm glad you have reached her at last, at the cost of a great deal of patience and——"

"Oh, stop!" cried Ruth impatiently, pulling away her hand to put her fingers in her ears. "It hasn't cost me anything. One would think from the way you both talk that I had done something extraordinary. *Anybody* in my position would have done what I did. But," she paused for a moment, "she is so different now—so gentle, so ready to be advised, almost too grateful, if you can understand what I mean."

"She is independent," replied Trelling dryly; "perhaps that has something to do with it. Although, indeed, you loved her enough to justify your gifts to her. What is she going to do with herself?"

"I don't know what she will do eventually. She is going down to Cornwall for a time with Aunt Monica, to see a girl

she knows there called Mary Gannet, who is in some trouble. She can't rest now! She is wild to be doing something."

"Then it won't be long before she finds out something to do."

His words set Ruth thinking. For some moments she sat in silence. Then she drew nearer to him and rested her cheek against his arm.

"Do you know, Robert, somebody—it was Sir Benjamin Reade—once said those very same words to me. And—I found it," she added quickly. "Thank God!"

Chapter Thirty

"Sleepe after toyle, porte after stormie seas,
Ease after warre, life after death, doe greatlie please."
SPENSER

IN Gannet's kitchen at Tremellon there sat three visitors. Words between them were few, for Mary Gannet, who could bear but little talk, lay on a bed at the farther end of the room. Rose de Winton sat beside her; Mrs. Renowden knitted in the armchair; and on the ground near the fire, her shawl pulled over her head, crouched Meg Doon. In another corner was a rough cradle, in which there lay a sleeping child.

The winter afternoon was nearly done; there was little light; but the burning boughs in the fireplace shot brightness, now on Mrs. Renowden's knitting needles, and now on Rose de Winton's hair. The woman on the bed lay in darkness.

The silence was unbroken; sometimes the burning wood fell with a soft crash.

At last Mary Gannet spoke. Her voice was low and husky; it came with a great effort from between labored breaths.

"Then ye'll tak the cheeld?" The words were spoken to Rose de Winton.

"Yes," Rose replied, slowly and gravely. Then, after a pause, and as though the next words set a seal upon something well considered, she added, "I will take the child."

So Rose faced the first responsibility she had ever encountered; she was alive to its seriousness; it was part of the new circumstances in which she found herself. "I will take the child. He shall be"—she paused and her voice shook—"my child."

Not for anything could she have mastered that sudden tremble. The remembrance of her stupendous loneliness, which had been for so many days partially forgotten, suddenly

returned and pierced her heart; and with it came the agony of her thwarted nature, and the shame of the deadly knowledge forced upon her.

"My child," she repeated the phrase a second time, and as she did so she found in it another significance. The flood of anguish rolled away, leaving her—as Ruth knew her always—gentle and almost happy. A life was to be entrusted to her care, a new life, a symbol as it were of her own new life—her resurrection. "I will bring him up in the best way I know." The words held a promise for the future. They were touched with hope.

"Thank'ee," returned the dying woman, apparently in some relief; "I'll rest easy now that the boy beant fur the wark-house. I'd laike 'ee tu take he up along in gude time thaw. The leaving and the deeing be best apart, to my theenking. Us doan't belong tu be together fur day an' neet."

"I will take him at once," said Rose. "I will go back to Trevean and tell Miss Holden." Without more talk she rose and went to the door.

Mary Gannet raised herself upon her elbow.

"Come back!" she said, speaking with difficulty, and then glancing at the silent figures by the fire as though fearful of being overheard. "I've a word fur 'ee."

The whisper hardly reached Rose, but at the faint movement she turned and saw that Mary wanted her. She came back and, kneeling by the bed, took the damp hand that seemed to melt in her grasp, so fragile was it.

"Bend near your yead," said the sick woman. "Bend it close, near to my mouth, fur I've that tu tell 'ee that's not fur every ear, boot only fur the ear o' she that takes the cheeld. See here, ye've nawthing tu be afeared av in the vean cheeld, though you might say you do get 'ee from the work-house. But he'll repay you, and I know that weel. He'll graw gert an' brave like to his faither; he'll graw to be as up-standing a man as any in Tremellon. There be naw natral weakness in me neither. I was a strong young woman ance—a bowerly maid I was, volks said. 'Tis only pain an' cold an' deep sorrow as have laid theer hand upon me. 'Tis only that,

an' out o' that have sprung the cheeld. 'Tis the new life, an' you that knaws well du know what that du mean—more than du most, I'm thinking, so be it you've never borne a cheeld. You that du know, ye'll guard him well fur the sake av the heavy load we bear together, yu an' me."

"I'll guard him well," said Rose. She stood straight now and her eyes were shining. Then she stooped and kissed the woman on the lips.

As the door closed behind her Meg Doon shifted her position.

"Like tu like!" she said with a cackle. "Volks say that that gel fur all her wheedlin' ways be naw better than she should be!"

The sick woman did not stir, she seemed to be asleep, but Mrs. Renowden rose fiercely at Meg's remark.

"Ess fay, Meg Doon, that ward be like your foul ongrateful heart! When 'tis owing to she, and to she alone as yu be settin' here an' taken back tu decent living volk who know naught av your devil's ways. Let alone, us 'ud have nought tu du wi' 'ee, a black witch! But she—she doan't let us alone, she frets an' she worrits ontill she finds a place in the world for sich as 'ee. And I tell 'ee tu that in the wan month she du be back in Tremellon that vean gel have brought more comfort to vagabonds, an low scum and all sich as have loast theer footing in the way a' leef, than any man or woman as ever I heard tell on, an' that's the trewth o' God fur 'ee, Meg Doon, and that I'll shaw 'ee."

Meg laughed harshly, not altogether displeased at Mrs. Renowden's attack. She was happy in being feared, and according to her nature she despised those to whom she was indebted.

"I tould the fortun' of yon gal onst," she said with a touch of pride; "all thru those devil's ways as you du caal 'em, an' she did pay I weel, gould guineas fur a fortun' of black cauld arth. Boot she have broke the doom. Some other Power be got across the stars. 'Tis laike that sometimes. No Fate on airth be sealed fur sartain. That's my ward. Sealed it be, bout not sealed tu our knowing, an' that's the same as not

being sealed at all, for all the gude it does us. Ess fay," she added staring at the fire. "Us du be born wan theeng and sometimes us du die anither. An' that's my ward tu. 'Tis a vair droll warld, as skisky as a dancing bear, an' He that made it must have more than a pottle o' laughter at its antics!"

"Or maybe tears!" said Mrs. Renowden. "Maybe 'tis with gert trouble an' sighin' that He gets the warld to go at all!"

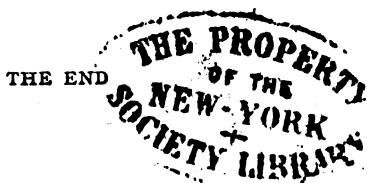
"Or maybe," said a whisper from the bed, "'tis He that made us knaws us—an' all the evil an' the grief, an' He that sees reet through tu the far end, may be, is not so gertly grieved about us—laike a mother when her babe be teething."

"Maybe wan theeng," said Mrs. Renowden, "maybe the ither." Then, emphatically, as though delivering a judgment well pondered: "But I du knaw this fur sartain, that 'tis out o' our own finding that we three du tark! As a man leeves his days so du that man theenk his thoughts; an' I wouldn't gi' wan brass farden fur yure opeenion, Meg Doon!"

Mary Gannet died happier in her death than in her life (and may God have mercy on such as she!), but Rose de Winton, holding at her breast a child whose fair head nestled on her shoulder, turned her face to a new world; and in after years Ruth Trelling, who knew her best—better even than Monica Holden, her nearest friend, with whom she lived, wondered that she had never known, at first, how beautiful that face was.

"Great treasure halls hath Zeus in heaven
From whence to man strange dooms be given
Past hope or fear,
And the end men looked for cometh not
And a path is there where no man thought
So hath it fallen here."

Euripides, trans. GILBERT MURRAY





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